Looking for the Enemy

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Preface

I wrote most of what follows in 1993, and it has been available since that time on the internet, on my own website (www.mdmorrissey.info) and elsewhere. The last piece, a review of Nigel Turner's documentary about the JFK assassination (Addendum 7), written in 1989, was actually the first, and I include it because all of this writing should be taken as a kind of memoir. It is the story of my intellectual awakening, if "awakening" can apply to such a rude enlightenment as that described here. If history was for James Joyce a "nightmare from which we are trying to awake," it was for me a rather innocuous dream, a fairy tale, from which I did awaken, one night in November 1988.

I would like to say it was the result of something fittingly traumatic, like a close brush with death, or falling in love, but no, I was only watching TV. Who would think that this medium, as banal and soporific as it normally is, could be the instrument of one's mental awakening?

I would not have thought so. I was taken completely by surprise. I was not a political person. I never had been. Even during the Vietnam war, I wouldn't say that I was political. I was not an activist. Many of my friends were, and I went on some protest marches, but I had no agenda, no philosophy, and basically no ax to grind, except the war. I didn't like marching with people waving the hammer and sickle, or the North Vietnamese flag, or pictures of Che Guevara. It wouldn't have occurred to me then, as it would now, that such people are likely to be *provocateurs*. I just wanted to end the war, and I couldn't understand how those smart professors from Harvard and MIT who were running our foreign policy could be so stupid as to waste American lives in Vietnam. I hated them, but I didn't understand them.

As I watched the Turner film on television that night in November 1988, I realized what it was that I had not understood. They weren't stupid, the brilliant Messrs. Bundy and Rostow and McNamara and Kissinger, etc. They were lying. They may have believed the war was in their interests, but it was a lie to pretend that it was in ours. They were, in short, the enemy.

I had never really thought of the government as the enemy, even during Vietnam days. A middle-class white American, the son of a West Pointer and brother of another, does not come to such a conclusion easily. I had always thought that somewhere down the line, we Americans were all on the same side. As the truth about the Kennedy assassination, which I was hearing for the first time, invaded my brain, that belief disappeared.

I grew up on Army posts. Fort Slocum, Fort Richardson, Fort Meade. Lots of Forts. It wasn't a bad life for a kid – "dependents," as we were called. We had nice quarters and, depending on the post, sports facilities, swimming pools, libraries, craft shops, social clubs, garden plots, even beaches and golf courses – everything you could ask for in a civilian community, and more, with free medical and dental care, subsidized housing, and big discounts on everything in the commissaries and PXs. The military life – as many a staunch flag-waving defender of the "American Way" will be surprised to know – is the closest thing to socialism that we have in America.

What happened, then, to me – this somewhat disaffected but still red-blooded

American boy (by this time a rather older boy of 42)? Nothing and everything. I saw a film on TV. But it was as if a giant hand had reached out of the tube and grabbed me by the throat, and rung me like a bell. I changed my mind. I don't think you can appreciate the meaning of that expression – what it means to really change your mind – until it happens to you. It's not so much that you change your mind as your mind changes on you. I have lived long enough now to know that it doesn't happen often – maybe once or twice in a lifetime. It may never happen to some people. Maybe it never happens to most people. I don't know. I know that it happens to some, and that it happened to me.

I am not talking about a pleasant experience. It destroys a lot. Most of what it destroys is garbage, but you don't realize that it is garbage until the destruction – or shall we call it deconstruction – begins. This can be a long process, using up a lot of time and energy and filling one's head with painful, horrific thoughts ("Discombobulating Idea Pits," as I call them in the Introduction). This is why most of us prefer not to think them, as long as we can. The psychiatric term for this is *denial*, but it is not a disease. It is a survival mechanism.

I had no choice. When I saw the Turner film, I knew immediately that the government was responsible for the killing as well as the cover-up, and that the media were fully complicit in the latter. Vietnam wasn't mentioned, but I remember thinking, even then, *And what about the war?* I didn't have the answer to this question yet, because I had never heard of JFK's withdrawal plan. The first reference I saw to that was in David Scheim's *Contract on America*, though he mentions it only in passing, his (erroneous) thesis being that the Mafia killed the president. (If they did, it was a CIA contract.)

Once I learned that JFK had planned to withdraw from Vietnam by the end of 1965, the connection with the assassination was clear. The more I looked into it, the clearer it got. This led me to the Bay of Pigs, AIDS, and the other things I talk about in this book, and to my correspondence with Fletcher Prouty, Noam Chomsky, and Vincent Salandria. (Since Fletcher later turned up as Mr. X in *JFK*, I still wonder if it was my letter to Oliver Stone in 1989 recommending the Turner film and suggesting a connection with Vietnam that led him to Prouty. Stone replied at the time that he had not heard of the Turner film.)

These are three very different men (Prouty died in June 2001), but all three have influenced me strongly. My long (and continuing) correspondence with Vince has been especially rewarding (cf. my *Correspondence with Vincent Salandria*, 2007), and I am proud to count him as one my dearest friends, even though I have only met him once in the flesh. I considered Fletch a friend, too, although I met him only twice. He could hardly have been more different from Vince, or Chomsky for that matter, with his military background, but I could relate to him. I had been a draft dodger, not a soldier, but we understood each other. After all, I grew up around soldiers. He reminded me in many ways of my father, and many others of his generation. I respected him. It was he who alerted me to the significance of the Herrhausen assassination (see Ch. 3.3).

I respected Chomsky, too – to put it mildly. I revered him. It was a great shock and disappointment to discover, as I did in the course of our correspondence, that he was not the man I had thought him to be. I still have very ambivalent feelings about him. How could I not, when I agree with almost everything he says, except on so-

called "conspiracy theories"? I include my correspondence with him here (that is, my part, with summaries of his part) because I think that slogging through this admittedly turgid material is the only way to understand how I came to change my mind about him (see Addenda 5-6). Everyone I know that has taken the trouble to read through it agrees with me, but I would not want anyone to agree without reading through it. It is wrong to dismiss him, or anyone else, just because they do not share your point of view. The devil is in the details. This is true of the other texts I have analyzed here as well, and I realize that it all makes for difficult reading, but in the case of Chomsky there is at least a dialogue, since he did respond to my letters, even though he did not allow me to reproduce them verbatim. It is through this dialogue, I think, repetitive though it is, but also precisely because of this repetitiveness, that the reader can come to understand the frustration, and in the end the bitter disappointment, that I experienced myself.

On the positive side – and I do not mean this at all facetiously – this correspondence bolstered my self-confidence and helped me to realize something that I now consider of fundamental importance. We don't need heroes, and sometimes, perhaps more often than not, they do more harm than good. It is wrong to let others do your thinking for you. It is easy, and we do it all the time without even realizing it, by accepting things that people say that we "trust," including all the underlying assumptions that lead these people to say what they do. Most of the time, this is inevitable. We can hardly investigate everything first hand. But one must learn that there are sometimes things that one simply has to make up one's own mind about, however difficult and unpleasant that task may be, if one is to know the truth, or at least feel that one has arrived at the truth. Otherwise we are awash in a sea of contradictions and uncertainties that, after a certain point at least, become intolerable, and this is the desperation that leads to fanaticism and irrational beliefs of the most outlandish and pernicious sort. In a world where anything can be true, nothing is true, and therefore any belief or blind faith, whether it takes the form of patriotism, racism, anti-Semitism, or the belief that Martians have taken over the earth, can be justified. There are times when we just have to dig in our heels and try to find out the answers for ourselves.

This is what I did with Chomsky, on this one point of the connection between the assassination and the war. I have no doubt as to the significance of this debate. If it were unimportant, he would not have pursued it with me as persistently as he did. I feel we exhausted the issue, and I take some pride in my own stubbornness, if that is what it was, because I know of no other instance where he has been taken to task to this extent. I feel the correspondence proves something, but I will allow the reader to decide just what that is. I have presented the raw material; you draw the conclusions.

The Postscript, entitled "The Assassination of President Gore," rounds off the century. The stealing of the election in 2000, in retrospect, marks the beginning of the Bush II regime and the "war on terror," which is also a war on the U.S. Constitution and the American people since it is being paid for with their taxes, their blood, and the sacrifice of their constitutional rights. We know this now, and many of us are fighting to prevent the further entrenchment of fascism, but it was not so clear in 2000, and I have rewarded myself for this bit of prescience by reprinting this article, which was also circulated at the time on the internet. I was simply reading the writing

on the wall, but obviously not many of my compatriots were able to do so at that time, or even in 2004 when Bush was re-elected – probably again with the help of election fraud, but still, even after the lies about Iraq's responsibility for 9/11 and non-existent weapons of mass destruction, with a shamefully large portion of the vote.

It is now 2007. Many a reader will be familiar with the rapid growth, over the past few years, of "conspiracy theories" regarding 9/11 – best summarized and articulated, I feel, in the works of David Ray Griffin. I agree fully with Griffin, and if I had to choose someone to replace Chomsky in my pantheon of "heroes," I would probably choose Griffin. (They are not far apart, in fact, if one eschews the word "conspiracy." What Griffin calls "evil" Chomsky calls "US imperialism.") I hope I have learned my lesson, though, and will reserve the pantheon for the mythological creatures that more rightly belong there (Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, etc.).

It will be easier, given the popularity of the idea that the Bush government had foreknowledge of the attacks, did nothing to stop them, failed to investigate them properly, and perhaps were complicit in them (in order to promote the "war on terrorism" agenda), to deal with some of the ideas I have elaborated here. But the popular memory is short. AIDS, for example, has been all but obliterated from public consciousness, even though it is as lethal and threatening to the world population as ever, and even though the question of its origin is no clearer than it ever was. Alan Cantwell is the only person I know who is still pursuing the subject. It is not an easy subject to pursue, as I discovered (see Ch. 4), and in fact it would be impossible to pursue it as I did the JFK and Vietnam issue with Chomsky, because I would have to become a microbiologist first.

The same thing is likely to happen with 9/11. I do not think the 9/11 "truth movement" will succeed. It cannot, any more than the JFK "truth movement" has succeeded. But one has to ask just what "success" can mean in these cases. Those who wait for the truth about these events, and many more, to be published in *Newsweek* or the *New York Times* have many more decades to wait. But is this the proper measure of truth? Must we depend on the media, or governments, or in fact on anyone, to tell us what the truth is, and what reality is?

Hence the nature of this book, as I've said, as a memoir rather than an "exposé." I can't prove anything, no matter how many facts I gather, or how well I present them. I have felt tempted to try to turn the Bay of Pigs work into a more acceptable academic effort, since I think I did in fact discover something there, but why? How well has academia served us in the pursuit of truth in these questions? Not at all, I'm afraid, and in fact the contrary has all too often been the case. Scholars, as Noam Chomsky himself has said often enough, are often the most thoroughly brainwashed propagandists of all. They almost have to be, to make it through the academic mill. The typical successful scholar is hardly a rebel; he is more likely a patient and diligent conformist, content to accept and work through tons of paper that people just like him have produced before him, before adding his own footnotes to the heap. I no longer have the patience for this, and as for proof, I'm quite happy to have found no smoking gun, because if I had I would probably be dead.

What I can do, and what I hope this book does, is offer some encouragement. There will be others who wake up one day, as I did, to home sweet home and find it is a rat's nest. Take heart. You are not alone. The truth exists, but we have powerful

enemies. Evil, in David Griffin's terms, also exists. We must continue to ferret them both out, and have faith that someday justice will be done. It doesn't matter what appears in *Newsweek* or the *New York Times*, or on TV. What matters is that we use our God-given intelligence to distinguish between good and evil, and to further the cause of the former rather than the latter. It is an ancient struggle. We have to take the long view.

INTRODUCTION

In November 1988 I saw a documentary called *Präsidentenmord* on German TV (WDR 3) that convinced me, within the space of an hour and a half, that after 20 years of formal education and a reasonable amount of "keeping up with the news," I knew absolutely nothing about the most important political event of my lifetime: the assassination of President Kennedy. I had never heard the words "coup d'état" in connection with the assassination before, or if I had, they had never registered. I knew nothing of the plethora of evidence implicating the government. Whatever the truth about the assassination was, I now knew one thing for certain: I had been a victim of mind control. For that no proof was needed; I was my own Exhibit A.

The original English title of the film was *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, produced by Nigel Turner for the British network ITV. It was not broadcast anywhere in the US until three years later, by which time it had appeared in 50 other countries. There is no doubt in my mind why this film was suppressed: millions of Americans would have discovered what I discovered – that television is the most powerful weapon ever invented. Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons attack our bodies first, but TV is wired directly to the brain. The fact that it is used almost exclusively as a soporific and propaganda instrument (which amount to the same thing) does not diminish its potential to enlighten. Enlightenment being the first prerequisite of revolution, it follows that of all the media, television must be the most subject to control. This is as true of American society as it is of overt dictatorships, though obviously the mechanisms of control are less conspicuous. Many examples could be cited, but the case in point is proof enough: I challenge anyone to produce a credible explanation, compatible with the principles of a free press that we pay lip service to, of why people in 50 countries saw this film before it reached an American audience.

The Turner film doesn't mention Vietnam. I didn't make that connection until weeks later, when I read *Contract on America* (called *The Mafia Killed President Kennedy* in England [London: WH Allen, 1988]) by David Scheim, who mentions Kennedy's withdrawal plan, albeit in passing. I had always believed that Kennedy got us into Vietnam, and that Johnson got us in deeper. I never knew that Kennedy also tried to get us out. I am quite aware, now, that this is a moot point, for reasons that are all too clear, but again, I do not have to resolve that question to know what I know now, and to know that I did not know it for a quarter of a century, even though I was as caught up in the controversy about the war as anyone else who lived through those years: I had never even heard of JFK's withdrawal plan until I saw this passing reference in Scheim's book. The information was *accessible*, but it had not *reached* me. This is the key to understanding media control in a "free" society.

I am sure I am no exception. How many people had heard of NSAM 263 before Oliver Stone made *JFK*? Enter the second stage of damage control. When information and ideas gain enough momentum on their own to become dangerous, that is, when they spread among the population despite monumental efforts of the mainstream media to confine them to marginalized political groups ("extremists," left and right) and wackos ("conspiracy buffs"), the strategy of suppression – since it cannot become overt – is replaced by a direct offensive. Fire can be fought with fire, as long as the firefighters are under control. Hence *JFK*.

JFK was released in December 1991, three months after the Turner film was finally given limited exposure – on A&E cable in September 1991. This was no accident. The Stone film tells the whole story, but as a work of "fiction," it is much easier to discredit than a documentary. Whatever impact the Turner film might have had was lost in the furor over *JFK*. I don't doubt Oliver Stone's intentions. He is a vet, i.e., a victim; I was a draft-dodger and protester. But we feel the same rage. The question is, what was Time Warner's interest in producing the film? Money is one answer, of course, but it is not enough. The largest propaganda machine on earth is not in the business of fomenting revolution, even for big bucks. And there is no doubt that *JFK* is a – potentially – revolutionary film. Why should Big Brother's favorite mouthpiece make a revolutionary film?

The answer is clear. *JFK* was intended to be exactly what it has become: the assassination film to end all assassination films. Stone wrote the message loud and clear across the silver screen, but the media campaign against it was louder. The result was a general consensus among the skeptical that the truth was unknowable, and even deeper resignation among those of us who believed the film *was* the truth. I'm not the only person who has asked himself: "If that doesn't do it, what will?" Thanks to *JFK*, despite Stone's good intentions, the assassination is a burnt-out case. It will not flare up again soon. It is Old News.

The management of *JFK* is an excellent example of how control is maintained in a "free" society. According to a *Time*/CNN poll taken just before the film was released, 73% of Americans thought the assassination was a conspiracy, and 68% of these (i.e. 49.6% of all Americans) said the CIA or the US military may have been involved (*Time*, Jan. 13, 1992, European ed., p. 40). That is 125 million Americans, half the population, who thought Stone and Garrison might be right *before* they saw the film. It's a fair guess that many more think so now. This must be compared to the great majority of journalists and "respectable" scholars who immediately condemned the film as fantasy, "dancing with facts," the paranoia of a war-crazed veteran, etc. How many of these bothered to check their own ignorance of the facts, which have never reached the mainstream media, against the extensive research and documentation that Stone published as footnotes to the screenplay (*JFK: The Book of the Film*, Oliver Stone and Zachary Sklar, New York: Applause Books, 1992) – a first for a Hollywood production? Yet this is the film that is condemned as "dancing with facts."

The gap between the general public, being less "educated" and thus less propagandized than those of us who go to school for decades and learn how not to think, becomes apparent whenever someone like Stone on the "lunatic fringe" gets enough attention to expose the boundaries of permissible thought. It can also be measured directly. According to a 1990 Gallup poll sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 71% of the general public felt the Vietnam War was not just a mistake but "fundamentally wrong and immoral" (*The Nation*, Oct. 12, 1992, p. 386). Only 58% of "opinion leaders" (journalists, businessmen, academics, government officials) agreed. I have no doubt that a similar poll about the Stone film would show an even greater difference.

The principle of mind control in a relative free and open society is that the public can think what it likes, as long as the opinion leaders are under control. This ensures

that the general population, for the most part, will remain passive, because we assume the "free press" has things under control. It does, of course, but not in the way we assume. Horace Greeley's "guardian of freedom" is not the people's watchdog but the lapdog of the government and business interests (which are largely identical). Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky demonstrate the point conclusively in their book *Manufacturing Consent* (NY: Pantheon, 1988).

There is no point in saying much about the assassination here – assassinations, rather, since the murder of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were as clearly conspiratorial as that of JFK. The evidence is in; the books have been written; the movies have been made. Those who await "proof" will be disappointed. There will be no "proof" unless there is a revolution, which seems unlikely, or until the truth about JFK means no more to our grandchildren than the truth about Garfield, Lincoln, and McKinley means to us – namely, nothing at all. We cannot expect the state to declare itself illegitimate.

This does not prevent us, however, from indulging in what the Establishment apologists and damage-control experts dismiss as "conspiracy theorizing." The word "conspiracy" is anathema to all "respectable" commentators, right and left, despite the fact that we are surrounded by conspiracies and conspirators. We read about them every day: Watergate, October Surprise, S&L, Iran-Contra, BCCI, BNL, Iraqgate, Inslaw, etc. Conspiracy is a crime defined by law and a charge regularly leveled at our public officials. Yet the press consistently uses the word as if conspiracy theorizing, rather than conspiracy, was the crime.

According to my dictionary, a conspiracy is a secret plan by more than one person to do something bad or illegal. By that definition, government itself is a conspiracy. What government does not plan secretly to do bad things? What is the CIA if not an *institutionalized* conspiracy? What is its Directorate of Operations if not the Department of Conspiracy? People in what is euphemistically called the "intelligence community" itself, as opposed to the hear-no-evil press, have no illusions about their work. After the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, one of the first directors of the CIA, put it plainly to the investigative committee appointed by Kennedy:

> When you are at war, Cold War if you like, you must have an amoral agency which can operate secretly and which does not have to give press conferences...I think that so much publicity has been given to CIA that the covert work might have to be put under another roof...It's time we take the bucket of slop and put another cover over it (*Operation Zapata*, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1981, pp. 276-277).

Who knows where that bucket is now, or where it was in 1963? Who moves it around, at any given moment – or does it move all by itself, like the pointer on a ouija board? Everybody has his favorite bête noir: the CIA, the military-industrial-intelligence complex, the power elite, the ruling class, the high cabal, the secret team, the power control group, the establishment, the powers-that-be, the upper crust, the Fortune 500, corporate America, the Bilderbergers, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, P-2, the Montecarlo Comite, the Illuminati, the Freemasons, the Prieuré de Sion, Opus Dei, the Pope, the Anti-Christ, Martians... The shit bucket

will do. Whatever we call it, we cannot cover it with the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* and pretend it isn't there.

There is a sizeable contingent of progressive thinkers, particularly on the left, who reject conspiracy theories categorically as a method of analysis (c.f. Michael Albert, "Conspiracy?...Not!" in *Z*, January 1992). This is understandable, given the historical abuse of such theories by the fascist right. But to dismiss all conspiracy theories because of Goebbels is as wrong as dismissing Marx because of Stalin. Conspiracy theorizing and "institutional" or "structural" analysis are not two different kinds of analysis so much as two ends of a continuum, running from the particular to the abstract. Conspiracies are particular manifestations of -isms (capitalism or what have you). They should be part of the same analysis. My example of the CIA as a *structural* part of the US government and therefore an *institutionalized* conspiracy should make this clear.

Furthermore, this false dichotomy plays right into the hands of the CIA and their fellow conspirators, who would like nothing better than to see all conspiracy theories denounced and branded as fascist, which is the usual implication. (If this is true, the great majority of Americans are fascists, since 73% believe the assassination was a conspiracy.) The progressive movement is disserved by this pseudo-ideological debate. There is no contradiction between Jim Garrison and Noam Chomsky. They are both right, in my opinion. I don't see any difference between Chomsky's view of the world and that of many conspiracists, when he writes:

> Another objective [of "the bitter class war that is waged with unremitting dedication by the corporate sector, its political agents, and ideological servants"] is to establish a de facto world government insulated from popular awareness or interference, devoted to the task of ensuring that the world's human and material resources are freely available to the Transnational Corporations and international banks that are to control the global system" (" – Year 501 – World Orders Old and New: Part II," Z, July-August 1992, p. 8).

I don't think it matters much whether we call it the "corporate sector" or the shit bucket. It is the enemy, and it is deadly.

The essays that follow are dedicated to the "even-if-it's-true-there's-nothing-we-can-do-about-it" crowd, by whom we are all surrounded and whose ranks we are all tempted to join. I can't "prove" anything, of course, and I don't know what can be done. "Talk, save us," James Joyce said somewhere. Silence, in any case, will not. In order to de-fang things a bit and perhaps make the talk a little easier, I have taken to referring to these depressing ideas as DIPS, for Discombobulating Idea Pits:

DIP 1: The assassination was a coup d'état.
DIP 2: Propaganda rules.
DIP 3: AIDS is biological warfare.

These hypotheses do not correspond exactly to the points I wish to make, but what I will say supports them. They follow, to some extent, from each other. If DIP 1 is true, then 2 is true, and 3 is at least conceivable. The first essay, on the Bay of Pigs, supports DIP 1. The second is about JFK's Vietnam withdrawal policy, which also supports

DIP 1. The third discusses other possible conspiracies and how they, and the notion of conspiracy itself, are treated in the press. This supports DIP 2. The fourth essay supports DIP 3.

A pit, it should be noted, is not necessarily a place of total desperation. After all, even if my worst suspicions are correct and we are still living in a world of kings and slaves, when has it ever been any different? I do not expect the "well-educated" reader to accept this view, even for a moment. The illusion of freedom is not relinquished voluntarily. But I would leave him with this question, just in case the truth sneaks up on him one day and knocks him flat, as it did me: Are not the house slaves, who do the master's work and call it their own, the most wretched of all?

In late 1962, Kennedy was still fully committed to supporting the Diem regime, though he had some doubts even then. When Senator Mike Mansfield advised withdrawal at that early date:

> The President was too disturbed by the Senator's unexpected argument to reply to it. He said to me later when we talked about the discussion, "I got angry with Mike for disagreeing with our policy so completely, and I got angry with myself because I found myself agreeing with him (*Kenneth O'Donnell and Dave Powers, Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970, p. 15).

By the spring of 1963, Kennedy had reversed course completely and agreed with Mansfield:

> The President told Mansfield that he had been having serious second thoughts about Mansfield's argument and that he now agreed with the Senator's thinking on the need for a complete military withdrawal from Vietnam.
>
> "But I can't do it until 1965 – after I'm reelected," Kennedy told Mansfield....
>
> After Mansfield left the office, the President said to me, "In 1965 I'll become one of the most unpopular Presidents in history. I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now from Vietnam, we would have another Joe McCarthy red scare on our hands, but I can do it after I'm reelected. So we had better make damned sure that I *am* reelected (O'Donnell, p. 16).

Sometime after that Kennedy told O'Donnell again that

> ...he had made up his mind that after his reelection he would take the risk of unpopularity and make a complete withdrawal of American military forces from Vietnam. He had decided that our military involvement in Vietnam's civil war would only grow steadily bigger and more costly without making a dent in the larger political problem of Communist expansion in Southeast Asia (p. 13).

Just before he was killed he repeated this commitment:

> "They keep telling me to send combat units over there," the President said to us one day in October [1963]. That means sending draftees, along with volunteer regular Army advisers, into Vietnam. I'll never send draftees over there to fight" (O'Donnell, p. 383).

Kennedy's public statements and actions were consistent with his private conversations, though more cautiously expressed in order to appease the military and right-wing forces that were clamoring for more, not less, involvement in Vietnam, and with whom he did not want to risk an open confrontation one year before the election. As early as May 22, 1963, he said at a press conference:

> ...we are hopeful that the situation in South Vietnam would permit some withdrawal in any case by the end of the year, but we can't possibly make that

judgement at the present time (Harold W. Chase and Allen H. Lerman, eds., *Kennedy and the Press: The News Conferences*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1965, p. 447).

Then came the statement on October 2:

> President Kennedy asked McNamara to announce to the press after the meeting the immediate withdrawal of one thousand soldiers and to say that we would probably withdraw all American forces from Vietnam by the end of 1965. When McNamara was leaving the meeting to talk to the White House reporters, the President called to him, "And tell them that means all of the helicopter pilots, too" (O'Donnell, p. 17).

This decision was not popular with the military, the Cabinet, the vice-president, or the CIA, who continued to support Diem, the dictator the US had installed in South Vietnam in 1955. Hence the circumspect wording of the statement on Oct. 2, which was nevertheless announced as a "statement of United States policy":

> Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgement that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965, although there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 U.S. military personnel assigned to South Viet-Nam can be withdrawn (*Documents on American Foreign Relations 1963*, Council on Foreign Relations, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, p. 296).

NSAM 263, signed on Oct. 11, 1963, officially approved and implemented the same McNamara-Taylor recommendations that had prompted the press statement of Oct. 2. They recommended that:

> A program be established to train Vietnamese so that essential functions now performed by U.S. military personnel can be carried out by Vietnamese by the end of 1965. It should be possible to withdraw the bulk of U.S. personnel by that time.
>
> In accordance with the program to train progressively Vietnamese to take over military functions, the Defense Department should announce in the very near future presently prepared plans to withdraw 1000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963. This action should be explained in low key as an initial step in a long-term program to replace U.S. personnel with trained Vietnamese without impairment of the war effort (*Pentagon Papers*, NY: Bantam, 1971, pp. 211-212).

The withdrawal policy was confirmed at a news conference on Oct. 31, where Kennedy said in response to a reporter's question if there was "any speedup in the withdrawal from Vietnam":

> I think the first unit or first contingent would be 250 men who are not involved in what might be called front-line operations. It would be our hope to lessen the number of Americans there by 1000, as the training intensifies and is carried on in South Vietnam (*Kennedy and the Press*, p. 508).

By this time it had become apparent that Diem was not going to mend his brutal ways

and provide any sort of government in South Vietnam that the US could reasonably support, if indeed any US-supported regime had any hope of popular support at that point. The only alternative to a total US military commitment was to replace Diem with someone capable of forming a viable coalition government, along the lines of the agreement for Laos that had been worked out with Krushchev's support in Vienna in June 1962. The point of deposing Diem, in other words, was to enable an American withdrawal, as O'Donnell and Powers confirm:

> One day when he [Kennedy] was talking with Dave and me about pulling out of Vietnam, we asked him how he could manage a military withdrawal without losing American prestige in Southeast Asia.
>
> "Easy," he said. "Put a government in there that will ask us to leave" (p. 18).

This decision, too, was not popular with the Cabinet or with Johnson. Secretary of State Rusk said at a meeting on Aug. 31, 1963, "that it would be far better for us to start on the firm basis of two things – that we will not pull out of Vietnam until the war is won, and that we will not run a coup." McNamara agreed, and so did Johnson, the latter adding that he "had never really seen a genuine alternative to Diem" and that "from both a practical and a political viewpoint, it would be a disaster to pull out...and that we should once again go about winning the war." (NYT, *Pentagon Papers*, p. 205).

Diem and his brother Nhu were both murdered during the coup on Nov. 1, 1963, but much as Kennedy's critics might like to imply that he ordered their executions, he had nothing to gain from such barbarity. O'Donnell and Powers say the killings "shocked and depressed him" and made him "only more sceptical of our military advice from Saigon and more determined to pull out of the Vietnam war" (p. 17). The US liaison with the anti-Diem generals, Lt. Col. Lucien Conein, a long-time CIA operative who had helped Edward Lansdale and the CIA bring Diem to power in 1954, later told the press, on President Nixon's suggestion, that Kennedy had known about the Diem assassination plot, but this was a pure fabrication (Jim Hougan, *Spooks*, NY: William Morrow, 1978, p. 138). It is more likely that Diem and Nhu were killed by the same forces that killed Kennedy himself three weeks later.

Two days before Kennedy was shot, there was a top-level policy conference on Vietnam in Honolulu, where the issue was not just withdrawal but *accelerated* withdrawal, along with substantial cuts in military aid. As Peter Scott notes in his important but much-ignored essay in the Gravel edition of the *Pentagon Papers*, the Honolulu conference agreed to speed up troop withdrawal by six months and reduce aid by $33 million ("Vietnamization and the Drama of the Pentagon Papers," *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel edition, Vol. 5, Boston: Beacon Press, p. 224). The *New York Times* also reported that the conference had "reaffirmed the U.S. plan to bring home about 1,000 of its 16,500 troops from South Vietnam by January 1" (11/21/63, p. 8, quoted in Scott, p. 224).

Curiously, because of the Honolulu conference and a coincidental trip by other Cabinet members to Japan, the Secretaries of State (Rusk), Defense

(McNamara), the Treasury (Dillon), Commerce (Hodges), Labor (Wirtz), Agriculture (Freeman), and the Interior (Udall), as well as the Director of the CIA (McCone), the ambassador to South Vietnam (Lodge), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Taylor), and head of U.S. forces in Vietnam (Harkins) were all out of the country when Kennedy was killed. Only his brother Robert, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, who apparently returned to Washington from Honolulu on Nov. 21, the HEW Secretary (Celebrezze), and the Postmaster General (Gronouski) were in Washington on Nov. 22. Johnson, of course, was with the president in Dallas, but this too was curious, since normal security precautions would avoid having the president and vice-president away from Washington at the same time, and together.

2. LBJ's policy

In addition to Kennedy's own private and public statements, and the policy directed by NSAM 263, the second paragraph of Johnson's own directive, NSAM 273, signed four days after the assassination, explicitly affirms the continuation of the withdrawal plan announced on Oct. 2:

> The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of Oct. 2, 1963 (*Pentagon Papers*, NYT, p. 233).

Obviously, Johnson did not continue the withdrawal policy very long. Exactly when he reversed it is a matter of controversy, but it is certain that the decision was made by March 27, 1964: "Thus ended de jure the *policy* of phase out and withdrawal and all the plans and programs oriented to it (*Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., 2:196)." The first indication of this change came the day after the assassination: "The only hint that something might be different from on-going plans came in a Secretary of Defense memo for the President three days prior to this NSC meeting [on Nov. 26]." Johnson

"began to have a sense of uneasiness about Vietnam" in early December and initiated a "major policy review (2:191)."

It is not necessary to agree with Peter Scott that the text of NSAM 273 in itself reveals Johnson's reversal of Kennedy's policy, thus giving the lie to paragraph 2, which purports to continue that policy. The differences between the text proposed by McNamara/Taylor, JFK's White House statement, and LBJ's NSAM 273 are worth noting, however.

Where McNamara/Taylor refer to the security of South Vietnam as "vital to United States security," Kennedy says it is "a major interest of the United States as other free nations." The syntax is sloppy here, so that "as other free nations" could mean "as is that of other free nations [besides Vietnam]" or "as it is of other free nations [besides the US]," but in either case Kennedy is clearly attempting to relativize the US commitment to South Vietnam. Further on he refers to US policy in South Vietnam "as in other parts of the world," again qualifying the commitment. These qualifications are missing in Johnson's statement, which refers exclusively to Vietnam.

McNamara-Taylor refer to the "overriding objective of denying this country [South Vietnam] to Communism." Kennedy softens this to "policy of working with the people and Government of South Vietnam to deny this country to communism." Johnson hardens "overriding objective" again to "central object" (i.e. objective), which he defines as "to win their contest" rather than as "to deny this country to communism," which was Kennedy's formulation.

McNamara-Taylor talk about "suppressing the Viet Cong insurgency." Kennedy qualifies this as "the externally stimulated and supported insurgency of the Viet Cong." This is important, since the "Viet Cong" were nothing more than Vietnamese nationalists who happened to be living in South Vietnam. They were supported by the North, but in 1963 Ho Chi Minh would have been glad to stop the "external stimulation and support" he was giving the Viet Cong in exchange for nationwide free elections, which had been promised by the 1954 Geneva Accords but never took place, because he would have won in a landslide, in the South as well as the North. The best the US could have hoped for was a coalition government, as in Laos. By limiting the US commitment to stopping "external support" of the Viet Cong, Kennedy could well have been leaving the way open for a negotiated settlement. Johnson drops the term "Viet Cong" altogether and refers to the "externally directed and supported communist conspiracy." Kennedy's externally *stimulated* Viet Cong insurgency becomes Johnson's externally *directed* communist conspiracy. The Viet Cong have been completely subsumed under a much larger and familiar bugaboo, the international "communist conspiracy." In this one sentence, Johnson has greatly widened the war, turning what Kennedy was still willing to recognize as an indigenous rebellion into a primal struggle between good and evil.

But again, it is not necessary to agree that these textual differences give the lie to paragraph 2 of NSAM 273, where Johnson vows to continue Kennedy's withdrawal policy, to agree that Johnson did, *at some point*, reverse the policy. This would seem to be obvious, yet we find most historians bending over backward to avoid making this simple observation. In fact, we find just the opposite assertion – that there was *no change in policy*. If we take NSAM 273 at face value, we must say that this is correct: Johnson continued Kennedy's withdrawal policy.

But this is not what the historians mean when they say there was no change in policy. They mean that Johnson continued Kennedy's policy of *escalation*. The entire matter of withdrawal is ignored or glossed over.

3. The Establishment perspective

Let us take some examples, chosen at random (emphasis added):

> ...President Kennedy...began the process of backing up American military aid with "advisers." At the time of his murder there were 23,000 [sic] of them in South Vietnam. *President Johnson took the same view* of the importance of Vietnam...(J.M. Roberts, *The Pelican History of the World*, 2nd ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, p. 988-989).

> Although *Johnson followed Kennedy's lead* in sending more and more troops to Vietnam (it peaked at 542,000, in 1969), it was never enough to meet General Westmoreland's demands... (Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, NY: Random House, 1987, p. 405).

> By October 1963, some 16,000 American troops were in Vietnam... Under President Johnson, the "advisors" *kept increasing*...
>
> Lyndon Johnson, who had campaigned in 1964 as a "peace candidate," *inherited and expanded the Vietnam policy of his predecessor* (Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager, *A Pocket History of the United States*, 7th ed., NY: Pocket Books, 1981, p. 565-566).

These examples are typical of the more general view. As the treatments become more specialized, it becomes harder to separate fact from obfuscation, but it should be borne in mind that all of the accounts I will review contradict what one would think would be considered the most reliable source: the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers.

The Gravel account devotes 40 pages to the history of the withdrawal policy ("Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, 1962-1964," Vol. 2, pp. 160-200). It states clearly that "the policy of phase out and withdrawal and all the plans and programs oriented to it" ended "de jure" in March 1964 (p. 196). It also states clearly that the change in the withdrawal policy occurred *after* the assassination:

> The only hint that something might be different from on-going plans came in a Secretary of Defense memo for the President three days prior to this NSC meeting [on Nov. 26]....In early December, the President [Johnson] began to have, if not second thoughts, at least a sense of uneasiness about Vietnam. In discussions with his advisors, he set in motion what he hoped would be a major policy review... (p. 196).

There can be no question, then, if we stick to the record, that Kennedy had decided and planned to pull out, had begun to implement those plans, and that Johnson subsequently reversed them.

This clear account in the Gravel edition, however, is obscured in the more widely read New York Times "edition," which is really only a summary of the official history

by NYT reporters, with some documents added. The Gravel edition has the actual text, and is significantly different. The NYT reporters gloss over the history of the withdrawal policy in a way that cannot be simply to save space. NSAM 263 is not mentioned at all, and Kennedy's authorization of the McNamara-Taylor recommendations is mentioned only in passing, and inaccurately:

> [The McNamara-Taylor report] asserted that the "bulk" of American troops could be withdrawn by the end of 1965. The two men proposed and – with the President's approval – announced that 1,000 Americans would be pulled out by the end of 1963 (p. 176).

That this "announcement" was in fact a White House foreign policy statement is cleverly disguised (McNamara made the announcement, but it was Kennedy speaking through him), along with the fact that the president also approved the more important recommendation – to withdraw all troops by the end of 1965.
Earlier, the NYT reporter quotes a Pentagon Papers (PP) reference to the 1,000-man pullout (again ignoring the more significant total planned withdrawal by 1966) as "strange," "absurd," and "Micawberesque" (p. 113). Then he mentions a statement by McNamara that

> ...the situation deteriorated so profoundly in the final five months of the Kennedy Administration...that the entire phase-out had to be formally dropped in early 1964.

The reporter's conclusion is that the PP account

> presents the picture of an unbroken chain of decision-making from the final months of the Kennedy Administration into the early months of the Johnson Administration, whether in terms of the political view of the American stakes in Vietnam, the advisory build-up or the hidden growth of covert warfare against North Vietnam (p. 114).

This is quite different from the actual (Gravel) account. It implies that the change in the withdrawal ("phase-out") policy began well within Kennedy's administration; Gravel says the change began in December 1963. The "unbroken chain of decision-making" and "advisory build-up" implies that there never was a withdrawal plan.

This has been the pattern followed by virtually all individual historians. In his memoir *Kennedy* (NY: Harper & Row, 1965), Theodore Sorensen, who was one of Kennedy's speechwriters, does not mention the withdrawal plan at all. Arthur Schlesinger, another Kennedy adviser and a respected historian, has done a curious about-face since 1965, but in this early book he buries a brief reference to the White House policy statement in a context which makes it seem both insignificant and based on a misapprehension of the situation by McNamara, who

> ...thought that the political mess [in South Vietnam] had not yet infected the military situation and, back in Washington, announced (in spite of a strong dissent from William Sullivan of Harriman's staff who accompanied the mission) that a thousand American troops could be withdrawn by the end of the year and that the major part of the American military task would be completed by the end of 1965.

> This announcement, however, was far less significant than McNamara's acceptance of the Lodge pressure program [on Diem] (*A Thousand Days*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965, p. 996).

Schlesinger does not indicate that this "far less significant" announcement was a statement of official policy and implemented nine days later by NSAM 263, confirmed at the Honolulu conference on Nov. 20, and (supposedly) reaffirmed by Johnson in NSAM 273.

Stanley Karnow, the author of what many consider to be the "definitive" history of the Vietnam War (*Vietnam: A History*, NY: Viking Press, 1983), instead of citing the documents themselves, substitutes his own convoluted "analysis":

> ...what Kennedy wanted from McNamara and Taylor was a negative assessment of the military situation, so that he could justify the pressures being exerted on the Saigon regime. But Taylor and McNamara would only further complicate Kennedy's problems (p. 293).

This image of a recalcitrant McNamara and Taylor presenting a positive report when Kennedy expected a negative one is absurd, first because both McNamara and Taylor were in fact opposed to withdrawal, and second because if Kennedy had wanted a negative report, he would have had no trouble procuring one. He already had plenty, as a matter of fact, most recently that of Joseph Mendenhall, a State Department official, who had told Kennedy on Sept. 10 that the Diem government was near collapse.

Karnow goes on to enlighten us as to McNamara and Taylor's true motivation for recommending the withdrawal of 1,000 troops by the end of the year: "to placate Harkins and the other optimists" (p. 293). Again, this is patently absurd. First McNamara and Taylor are presented as defying the president's "true wishes," and then as deliberately misrepresenting the situation to "placate" the commanding general (without bothering to explain why troop withdrawals would be particularly placating to the general in charge of them). Karnow fails to mention NSAM 263, and the reason is clear: he would be hard put to explain, if the recommendations were "riddled with contradictions and compromises" and contrary to the president's wishes, as Karnow says, why the president implemented them with NSAM 263.

Karnow also tells us why the recommendation to withdraw all US troops by 1965 was made: it was "a prophecy evidently made for domestic political consumption at Kennedy's insistence" (p. 294). This is hard to understand, since there was no significant public or "political" opposition to US involvement in Vietnam at that time, but plenty of opposition to disengagement. We now have Kennedy, in Karnow's view, wanting a negative report, getting a positive one, and insisting on announcing it publicly for a political effect that would do him more harm than good!

In an indirect reference to the Oct. 2 White House statement, Karnow begrudges us a small bit of truth:

> Kennedy approved the document [the McNamara-Taylor recommendations] except for one nuance. He deleted a phrase calling the U.S. commitment to

> Vietnam an "overriding" American goal, terming it instead a part of his worldwide aim to "defeat aggression." He wanted to preserve his flexibility (p. 294).

This confirms the importance of the textual changes in the two documents, as discussed above.

In *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984), Herbert Parmet mentions both the White House statement and the McNamara-Taylor report, but in a way that makes the two documents seem totally unrelated to each other. Of the White House announcement Parmet says only:

> On October 2 the White House announced that a thousand men would be withdrawn by the end of the year (p. 333).

The larger plan to withdraw all troops by 1965 is not mentioned at all. This is particularly misleading when followed by this statement:

> [Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell] Gilpatric later stated that McNamara did indicate to him that the withdrawal was part of the President's plan to wind down the war, but, that was too far in the future (p. 333).

Who is the author of the last part of this sentence, Gilpatric or Parmet? In any case, the end of 1965 was only two years away – hardly "far in the future," much less "too far," whatever that means.

Parmet continues:

> Ken O'Donnell has been the most vigorous advocate of the argument that the President was planning to liquidate the American stake right after the completion of the 1964 elections would have made it politically possible (p. 336).

This reduces the *fact* that Kennedy planned to withdraw, documented in the White House statement and in NSAM 263 and 273, to the status of an *argument* "advocated" by O'Donnell. This clearly misrepresents O'Donnell's account as well as the documentary record. O'Donnell does not *argue* that Kennedy wanted to pull out; he quotes Kennedy's own words, uttered in his presence. It is not a matter of interpretation or surmise. Either Kennedy said what O'Donnell says he said, or O'Donnell is a liar. As for the documentary record, in addition to misrepresenting the White House statement, Parmet, like Karnow and Schlesinger, completely ignores NSAM 263 and 273.

Parmet devotes the bulk of his discussion to the purely hypothetical question of what Kennedy *would have done* in Vietnam if he had lived. Parmet's answer: "It is probable that not even he was sure." This again flies in the face what we know. Kennedy knew what he wanted to do: withdraw. If Parmet's contention is that he would have changed his mind, had he lived, and reversed his withdrawal policy (as Johnson did), that is another matter. Parmet is trying to make us believe that it is not clear that Kennedy wanted to withdraw in the first place, which is plainly wrong.

The hypothetical question is answered by O'Donnell and Powers, who were in a much better position to speculate than Parmet or anyone else, as follows:

> All of us who listened to President Kennedy's repeated expressions of his determination to avoid further involvement in Vietnam are sure that if he had lived to serve a second term, the numbers of American military advisers and technicians in that country would have steadily decreased. He never would have committed U.S. Army combat units and draftees to action against the Viet Cong (p. 383).

Parmet says that for JFK "to have withdrawn at any point short of a clear-cut settlement would have been most unlikely" (p. 336). But "a clear-cut settlement" could range from Johnson's aim "to win" the war to Kennedy's more vaguely expressed aim "to support the efforts of the people of that country [South Vietnam] to defeat aggression and to build a peaceful and free society" (White House statement, Oct. 2, 1963).

Parmet cites Sorensen as affirming Kennedy's desire to find a solution "other than a retreat or abandonment of our commitment." This was in fact the solution that the withdrawal plan offered: our mission is accomplished; it's their war now. Parmet quotes from the speech Kennedy was supposed to deliver in Dallas the day he was killed, as if empty rhetoric like "we dare not weary of the test" [of supplying assistance to other nations] contradicted his withdrawal plan. He also cites Dean Rusk, who said in a 1981 interview that "at no time did he [Kennedy] even whisper any such thing [about withdrawal] to his own secretary of state." If that is true, Rusk knew less than the rest of the nation, who were informed by the White House statement on Oct. 2. Finally, Parmet quotes Robert Kennedy as saying that his brother "felt that South Vietnam was worth keeping for psychological and political reasons 'more than anything else,'" as if this supported Parmet's argument that JFK was fully committed to defending that corrupt dictatorship. But RFK could well have meant that South Vietnam was *not* worth keeping if it meant the US going to war – just the opposite of Parmet's interpretation.

Despite Kenneth O'Donnell's clearly expressed opinion in his 1970 memoir, Parmet manages to have him saying the opposite in a 1976 interview:

> When Ken O'Donnell was pressed about whether the President's decision to withdraw meant that he would have undertaken the escalation that followed in 1965, the position became qualified. Kennedy, said O'Donnell, had not faced the same level of North Vietnamese infiltration as did President Johnson, thereby implying that he, too, would have responded in a similar way under those conditions (p. 336).

Now – who said what, exactly? If we read carefully, it is clear that it is Parmet who is "qualifying" O'Donnell's position, and Parmet who is telling us what O'Donnell is "implying" – not O'Donnell.

John Ranelagh, a British journalist and author of what is widely considered an "authoritative" (i.e. sanitized) history of the CIA, describes Kennedy as

> ...a committed cold warrior, absolutely determined to prevent further communist expansion and in 1963 still smarting from the Bay of Pigs, the Vienna Summit, and the Cuban missile crisis. It was time to go on the offensive, show these communists what the United States could do if it put its mind to it, and Vietnam seemed the right place. It was an arrogance, born of ignorance of what

> the world really was like, assuming that American energy and power, applied with conviction, would change an essentially passive world. *At the fateful moment, when the United States could have disengaged itself from Vietnam without political embarrassment, there was a President in the White House looking for opportunities to assert American strength.*
>
> Kennedy wondered during 1963 whether he was in fact right in deciding that Vietnam was the place for the exercise of this strength, and some of his close associates subsequently were convinced that he would have pulled out had he lived. *But his own character and domestic political considerations militated against this actually happening.* In 1964 the Republican presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, ran on a strong prowar plank, and it would not have suited Kennedy – just as it did not suit Johnson – to face the electorate with the promise of complete disengagement. *In addition, in September 1963 McNamara was promising Kennedy that with the proper American effort the war in Vietnam would be won by the end of 1965. No one was listening to the CIA or its analysts* (*The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*, NY: Touchstone, 1987, p. 420; emphasis added).

Ranelagh not only ignores Kennedy's withdrawal decision "at the fateful moment," he transforms it into a desire "to assert strength," and has Kennedy pursuing the buildup for "domestic political considerations." (This is precisely opposite to Karnow's assumption, discussed above.) In the sentence beginning "In addition...", Ranelagh manages to "interpret" McNamara-Taylor's recommendation to pull *out* of Vietnam as an argument for Kennedy to stay *in*!

Ranelagh's opinion that "no one was listening to the CIA," implying that the CIA was pessimistic about the war in 1963, contradicts what he says a few pages earlier: "The Pentagon Papers...showed, *apart from the earliest period in 1963-64*, the agency's analysis was consistently pessimistic about U.S. involvement..." (p. 417, my emphasis). This is the familiar "lone voice in the wilderness" image of the CIA: only they were "intelligent" enough to read the writing on the wall. But if that is true, why did the agency try so hard (from 1954 to 1964) to get us involved in the first place, and why did they continue to support the war effort in clandestine operations throughout? The CIA's Ray Cline says (as quoted by Ranelagh):

> McCone [CIA Director under Kennedy and Johnson] and I talked a lot about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and we both agreed in advising that intervention there would pay only if the United States was prepared to engage in a long, difficult process of nation-building in South Vietnam to create the political and economic strength to resist a guerrilla war (p. 420).

Ranelagh intreprets this as evidence that the CIA wanted to withdraw from Vietnam in 1963. Nonsense. No one in the top echelons of the CIA, least of all Director John McCone, supported Kennedy's withdrawal plan in 1963. Nor does Cline's remark imply this. He is saying that the CIA's opinion (i.e. one of their opinions) was that to be "successful," the US would have to dig in for the long haul. I think the "long haul" is precisely what the CIA wanted, and precisely what Kennedy decided he did not want. That is why he decided to withdraw. Clearly, more powerful forces than Kennedy himself combined to make the intervention "pay" as the Johnson administration proceeded to engage in that "long, difficult process of nation-building" that generated hundreds of billions of dollars for the warmongers, destroying millions

of lives in the process.

Neil Sheehan, one of the editors of the NYT Pentagon Papers and the author of another acclaimed history of the war (*A Bright Shining Lie*, London: Picador, 1990), devotes exactly one sentence in 861 pages to the crucial White House statement of Oct. 2, and not a single word to NSAM 263 or 273. His view is consistent: the generals, except for a few, like John Paul Vann (the biographical subject of the book), were incredibly stupid to think the war was being won by our side, but Kennedy was even more stupid because he believed them. The McNamara-Taylor report is presented as the height of naivety, which, Sheehan adds sarcastically,

> ...recommended pulling out 1,000 Americans by the end of 1963 in order to demonstrate how well the plans for victory were being implemented. The White House announced a forthcoming withdrawal of this first 1,000 men (p. 366).

But "The President," Sheehan says, "gained no peace of mind." He was "confused" and "angry" at the conflicting reports. In other words, according to Sheehan, the withdrawal plan reflects nothing but Kennedy's "confusion" and misjudgement of the situation, based on the equally false evaluation of his Secretary of State and top military adviser.

As for the CIA, Sheehan, like Ranelagh, says the "analysts at the CIA told him [Kennedy] that Saigon's military position was deteriorating..." (p. 366). But Kennedy was too "confused" to understand this, and ordered withdrawal on the false assumption that the war was going well.

All of these studies bend over backward to avoid recognizing the documented fact that Kennedy had decided to withdraw from Vietnam by the end of 1965. The tactics of avoidance vary from ignoring the existence of any withdrawal plan at all to attributing it to wishful thinking, political expedience, or sheer stupidity and naivety.

At the same time, commentators are quick to remember the two TV interviews JFK gave in September 1963 (*Documents on American Foreign Relations*, pp. 292-295). On Sept. 2 he told Walter Cronkite of CBS: "But I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake." A week later he said to David Brinkley on NBC:

> What I am concerned about is that Americans will get impatient and say, because they don't like events in Southeast Asia or they don't like the government in Saigon, that we should withdraw. That only makes it easy for the Communists. I think we should stay. We should use our influence in as effective a way as we can, but we should not withdraw.

If any statements of that time frame were designed for political effect, these TV interviews were. Presidents are far more likely to play politics in television interviews than in official policy statements and Nation Security Action Memoranda. These remarks must be seen as coming from a president who was up for re-election in one year and who knew he would "be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser" if he withdrew from Vietnam, as he had told Ken O'Donnell a few months earlier.

Those who take the "we should not withdraw" sentence as Kennedy's final word on the matter do not point out that it is directly contradicted by the White House

policy statement and NSAM 263 the following month. Either Kennedy changed his mind or – more likely – the earlier public statements were meant to appease the pro-war forces. He also changed his mind about aid to South Vietnam:

> Mr. Huntley: Are we likely to reduce our aid to South Vietnam now?
> The President: I don't think that would be helpful at this time.

Whatever Kennedy meant by this in September, he thought and did the opposite in October, implementing the McNamara-Taylor recommendations for aid reduction in addition to troop reductions.
Kennedy also said in the Cronkite interview:

> In the final analysis, it is their [the South Vietnamese] war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it – the people of Vietnam – against the Communists. We are prepared to continue to assist them, but I don't think that the war can be won unless the people support the effort, and, in my opinion, in the last two months the government has gotten out of touch with the people.

He repeats this, almost verbatim, a few sentences later, obviously intent on emphasizing the point:

> ...in the final analysis it is the people and the government [of South Vietnam] who have to win or lose this struggle. All we can do is help, and we are making it very clear. But I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake.

In context, Kennedy may have been using the word "withdraw" here in the sense of "abandon." "Abandoning" Vietnam completely would indeed have been bad politics, but *reducing* aid (to force a change in Diem's policy) and withdrawing *troops* is not necessarily the same thing.

Similarly, in the NBC interview, before Kennedy says "we should not withdraw," he says:

> We have some influence, and we are attempting to carry it out. I think we don't – we can't expect these countries to do everything the way we want to do them [sic]. They have their own interest, their own personalities, their own tradition. We can't make everyone in our image, and there are a good many people who don't want to go in our image....We would like to have Cambodia, Thailand, and South Vietnam all in harmony, but there are ancient differences there. We can't make the world over, but we can influence the world.

This does not sound like a strong commitment. As a whole, these remarks are perhaps more accurately interpreted as: "We won't abandon them, but we won't do their fighting for them either." This is an interpretation, but a plausible one.

Despite the massive efforts to obscure it, the fact remains, and cannot be overemphasized, that Johnson reversed the withdrawal policy. The curious thing is that one hardly ever finds this fact plainly stated by those who should (and perhaps

do) know better. Richard Goodwin, an adviser to both Kennedy and Johnson, is a rare exception:

> In later years Johnson and others in his administration would assert that they were merely fulfilling the commitment of previous American presidents. The claim was untrue – even though it was made by men, like Bundy and McNamara, who were more anxious to serve the wishes of their new master than the memory of their dead one. During the first half of 1965 I attended meetings, participated in conversations, where the issues of escalation were discussed. Not once did any participant claim that we had to bomb or send combat troops because of "previous commitments," that these steps were the inevitable extension of past policies. They were treated as difficult and serious decisions to be made solely on the basis of present conditions and perceptions. *The claim of continuity was reserved for public justification; intended to conceal the fact that a major policy change was being made* – that "their" war was becoming "our" war (*Remembering America*, NY: Harper & Row, 1988, p. 373; emphasis added).

4. Reactions to Oliver Stone's *JFK*

Why do other historians find this observation by Goodwin so difficult to make? Because to acknowledge the fact of a major policy change in Vietnam means to acknowledge the possibility that the president was killed in order to effect this change.

Since this is precisely the thesis of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, it is not surprising to see that the critics have followed the same avoidance tactics.

The *Wall Street Journal* refers to the putative connection with Vietnam policy – which is the main point of the film – only obliquely, halfway through the review:

> We further agree that November 1963 was a turning point in the American commitment to Vietnam. But the key was not the assassination of JFK but the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem three weeks earlier. Once President Kennedy gave the go-ahead for a coup against an allied government in the name of winning the war, the U.S. was deeply committed indeed. Lyndon Johnson, who had opposed the coup, was left to pick up the pieces (12/27/91, p. A10).

The crucial fact presented in the film – that Johnson reversed Kennedy's withdrawal plan – is not even mentioned.

Time refers, also indirectly and buried midway in the article, to the portrayal of Kennedy's Vietnam policy as a figment of the imaginations of "the last misty-eyed believers in Camelot":

> They still hold to the primal scenario sketched in Oliver Stone's *JFK*: a Galahad-like John Kennedy gallantly battling the sinister right-wing military-industrial complex to bring the troops home, ban the Bomb and ensure racial equality on the home front – a Kennedy killed because he was just too good to live (European ed., 1/13/92, p. 39)

Here the word *Vietnam* does not even appear, and "bringing the troops home" is presented as only one of several equally mythical Kennedy objectives. Whether banning the Bomb and ensuring racial equality were on Kennedy's agenda is

debatable, but his decision to bring the troops home is not, or should not be.

In an article entitled "Does Stone's *JFK* Murder the Truth?" *(International Herald Tribune*, 12/17/91, reprinted from the *New York Times*), Tom Wicker writes – also about halfway through – that according to Stone and Garrison Kennedy "seemed to question" the goals of those who "wanted the war in Vietnam to be fought and the United States to stand tall and tough against the Soviets..." This not only reduces Kennedy's withdrawal decision to a "question" but implies that even that is not certain: he did not decide, he *questioned*, that is, he *seemed* to question.

Iain Johnstone tells readers of the *Sunday Times* (1/26/91, Sect. 6, pp. 12-13), again at mid-point position in his article, that the idea that Kennedy was "about to let down the military and munitions men by pulling out of Vietnam" is "doubtful." The only thing that is doubtful here is whether Johnstone has bothered to read the documents.

On the last page of a seven-page article in *GQ* (Jan. 1992, p. 75), Nicholas Lemann finally confronts Garrison's and Stone's main thesis by referring not to the documents but to a 1964 interview with Robert Kennedy. This is apparently the same 1964 interview cited by Herbert Parmet (discussed above). I have not been able to consult the original material, which is part of an oral history collection at the JFK Library in Boston, but it is interesting that Lemann cuts off the quotation at a strategic point.

> Interviewer: Did the president feel that we would have to go into Vietnam in a big way?
> RFK: We certainly considered what would be the result if you abandon Vietnam, even Southeast Asia, and whether it was worthwhile trying to keep and hold on to.
> Interviewer: What did he say? What did he think?
> RFK: He reached the conclusion that probably it was worthwhile...

This has to be a deliberate misrepresentation. The ellipsis conceals what we know from Parmet's citation:

> As Bobby Kennedy later said, his brother had reached the point where he felt that South Vietnam was worth keeping for psychological and political reasons "more than anything else." (Parmet, p. 336).

Piecing these two parts of RFK's remark together, the complete sentence would seem to have been:

> He reached the conclusion that probably it was worthwhile for psychological and political reasons more than anything else.

As I have already mentioned, "it was worthwhile" in this context more likely meant "it was not worthwhile" (psychological and political reasons hardly justifying a war), especially since we know, just as Robert knew, that President Kennedy had decided to terminate US military participation by the end of 1965.

The German reviews of *JFK*, though they generally take Stone's thesis more seriously than the American ones, are equally evasive on the point of Kennedy's Vietnam policy. Several long articles do not mention it at all (Kurt Kister, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1/22/92, p. 8; Verena Lueken, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1/24/92, p. 29). Peter Buchka in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (1/23/92, p. 10) mentions only that "a

withdrawal from Vietnam," according to Garrison and Stone, would have deprived the weapons industry of gigantic profits. Peter Körte in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (1/24/92, p. 22) notes that President Kennedy "said he would withdraw the troops from Vietnam if he was reelected," which is only half the truth.

The only German critic who even mentions NSAM 263, Rolf Paasch, the American correspondent for the (Berlin) *Tageszeitung*, questions Stone's "interpretation" of it:

> Whether his [JFK's] hints in 1963 about a withdrawal of US military advisers from Vietnam really demonstrated the conversion of a Cold Warrior, as Stone interprets on the basis of NSAM 263, cited in the film, or whether it was only opportunistic rhetoric aimed at his liberal supporters, is unclear (1/23/92, p. 18).

Here we are presented with two alternatives: NSAM 263 demonstrates either that Kennedy was a "converted Cold Warrior" or a liar. The possibility that he remained a Cold Warrior who just didn't feel like sacrificing thousands of American lives in Vietnam is not even considered. Why Paasch feels a clearly expressed presidential policy directive can be characterized as a "hint," why it requires "interpretation," and why he feels at liberty to question its sincerity, he does not say. It is clear that he has done his research by relying on the "interpretations" of American scholars like the ones we have discussed rather than on the prima facie documentary evidence.

Spiegel mentions Kennedy's Vietnam policy in the form of a rhetorical question: "In the weeks preceding the assassination, didn't he think about withdrawing the advisers from Vietnam?" (12/16/92, p. 192). If presidents issued NSAMs every time they "think about" something, the world would be a good deal more confused than it is.

In a box entitled "Was It [the assassination] a Plot to Keep the U.S. in Vietnam?" *Time* says that in Stone's movie Kennedy had "secret plans to withdraw from Vietnam" (2/3/92, European ed., p. 63). There was nothing secret about the White House statement on Oct. 2 or the press conference on Oct. 31, and the confirmation of the withdrawal plan at the conference in Honolulu was reported in the *New York Times* on Nov. 21, 1963. Certainly the withdrawal plan was not a secret within the Kennedy administration.

Then, magnanimously offering to set the record straight by presenting "the evidence," *Time* says:

> Kennedy confided to certain antiwar Senators that he planned to withdraw from Vietnam if re-elected, but publicly he proclaimed his opposition to withdrawal. In October 1963 he signed a National Security Action Memo – NSAM 263 – that ordered the withdrawal of 1,000 of the 16,000 or so U.S. military "advisers."
>
> After the assassination, Lyndon Johnson let the 1,000-man withdrawal proceed, but it was diluted so that it involved mainly individuals due for rotation rather than entire combat units. A few days after taking office, he signed a new action memo – NSAM 273 – that was tougher than a version Kennedy had been considering; it permitted more extensive covert military actions against North Vietnam. No one has come forward, however, with any direct knowledge of a military or CIA conspiracy.

This is a good example of gray propaganda – the half-truth. Kennedy's "opposition to withdrawal" is construed – probably falsely – from the September television interviews. The second half of this truth is that Kennedy publicly proclaimed the opposite – his intention to withdraw – in the Oct. 2 White House statement, of which *Time* conveniently omits mention. Similarly, *Time* tells us only half of what is in NSAM 263, leaving out the more important half, which implemented Kennedy's plan to remove all US troops – not just 1,000 – by the end of 1965.

What does the reference to Johnson's NSAM 273 as "tougher than a version Kennedy had been considering" mean? If the "Kennedy version" was Bundy's Nov. 21 draft of 273, this is wrong, because Kennedy never saw that draft, much less approved it.

Time acknowledges that Johnson "permitted more extensive covert military actions against North Vietnam," but why not also acknowledge that these commando operations later provoked the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which in turned served – quite fraudulently, as even establishment commentators now admit – as the basis for the congressional resolution that made Vietnam "our war," that is, exactly what Kennedy said in the September interviews he wanted to avoid.

By leaving out the crucial information, *Time* has Johnson merely "diluting" the 1,000-man withdrawal and making "tougher" a plan that Kennedy "had been considering." In other words, there was no policy reversal, and thus no background to a possible conspiracy. But let us substitute the whole truth for *Time's* half-truth, and then see what their conclusion looks like:

> [Johnson reversed Kennedy's plan to withdraw all US troops by the end of 1965 and] permitted more extensive covert military actions against North Vietnam. No one has come forward, however, with any direct knowledge of a military or CIA conspiracy.

Now the last sentence makes sense, but it is not the sense that *Time* wanted to convey. *Time* meant to tell us that 1) there was no policy reversal and thus no reason to suspect a conspiracy, and 2) that there is no direct evidence of one. The whole truth version tells us 1) that there was a policy reversal and thus good reason to suspect a conspiracy, but 2) there is no direct evidence of one.

There is no excusing such obvious abuse of logic and the evidentiary record. It has to be deliberate, since the writer obviously knows what is in the documents he describes and chooses to omit certain crucial information. What reader who bothers to read *Time* in the first place would suspect this? It is propaganda, pure but not simple. It takes skill to write like this.

5. Fire from the left

Alexander Cockburn, a talented writer and normally reasonable columnist for *The Nation*, was one of the first to condemn the Stone film. When it comes to the assassination, the views of this "radical leftist" fall right in line with those of the Establishment. In his review of *JFK*, Cockburn says the question of conspiracy in the assassination

> has as much to do with the subsequent contours of American politics as if he had tripped over one of Caroline's dolls and broken his neck in the White House nursery (*The Nation*, 1/6-13/92:6-7).

He doesn't even try to justify this point of view. He rejects the coup theory out of hand, along with all conspiracy theories, and then rejects any possible political significance of the assassination. The question is insignificant because he thinks he knows the answer.

Cockburn fights dirty. He dismisses Scott's "yearning interpretation" of the textual disparities between JFK's White House statement and Johnson's NSAM 273 but fails to mention the most important part of both of these documents – the part referring to the troop withdrawals. The reader cannot know from Cockburn's essay that either document mentions troop withdrawals or that this is a crucial point in Scott's analysis.

Since Cockburn makes no mention of JFK's withdrawal decision, it is easy for him to say there was "no change in policy" and call Scott's assertion to the contrary "fantasizing," but this misrepresents the facts. Cockburn has read Scott and he knows what is in the documents – not only in the first paragraphs, which he quotes, but also in the third paragraph of the White House statement and in the second paragraph of NSAM 273. These paragraphs refer to the withdrawal plan. Cockburn omits any mention of them.

Ignoring this documentary evidence of October and November, Cockburn backtracks to the spring of 1963 to argue with John Newman's "frequently repeated claim [in his then unpublished book, *JFK and Vietnam*] that by February or March of 1963 JFK had decided to pull out of Vietnam once the 1964 election was won," a claim for which Cockburn sees "an absence of any substantial evidence":

> Newman's only sources for this are people to whom J.F.K. would, as a matter of habitual political opportunism, have spoken in such terms, such as Senators Mike Mansfield and Wayne Morse, both of whom, particularly the latter, were critical of J.F.K.'s escalation in Vietnam.

There is no mention of Kenneth O'Donnell and Dave Powers, to whom Kennedy repeatedly told the same thing he told Mansfield. Would Kennedy have been being politically opportunistic with the most trusted members of his personal staff?

In a subsequent issue of *The Nation* (3/9/92:290,317-320), replying to letters from Zachary Sklar, Peter Scott, and Michael Parenti, Cockburn repeats his claim that there is no evidence to show that Kennedy had planned to withdraw as early as the spring of 1963, "aside from some conversations recollected by men such as Kennedy's political operative Kenny O'Donnell or Senators Wayne Morse and Mike Mansfield." This means that either Kennedy was lying, or O'Donnell et al. were lying.

The counterargument to these "lies" is Kennedy's "numerous statements to the contrary. There were plenty of those." Cockburn mentions two – a statement in July and his remarks in the Sept. 9 NBC interview. Newman explains these by suggesting that "J.F.K. was dissembling, concealing his private thoughts, throwing the hawks off track." Cockburn calls this "data-free surmises" and "a willful credulity akin to religious mania."

Why is it "credulous" to suggest that JFK was dissembling? And if this is "credulous," why is it less so to assume, as Cockburn does, that JFK was not only dissembling, but outright lying, to O'Donnell et al.? JFK was much more explicit in his reported remarks to O'Donnell and Powers than he was in the TV interviews. Which would be the more likely place for a politician to dissemble – in a TV interview or in a private conversation with his most trusted personal advisers? Did JFK tell the absolute truth on TV and lie to his advisers? Because Newman says the opposite, Cockburn says he is a religious maniac. Is this rational?

The crucial point, however, which Cockburn totally ignores, is that Kennedy did not wait for the 64 election as he said he would. He made the withdrawal announcement on October 2, 1963, and implemented it with NSAM 263 on October 11. Regardless of what he said publicly or privately in July or September, his official policy in October was withdrawal.

Just as he fails to mention the crucial documents – the McNamara-Taylor report and NSAM 263 – in his article, in his reply to the letters Cockburn, like *Time* magazine, fails to mention the most significant *parts* of both documents, which is not the 1,000-man pullout by the end of 1963 but the total pullout by the end of 1965. One cannot know, either from *Time* or from Cockburn, that Kennedy not only wanted 1,000 men out in two months but *everybody* out in two years.

Cockburn then says the 1,000-man withdrawal was "proposed" by McNamara and Taylor because "at that time they thought the war was going according to plan and victory was in sight." He fails to say 1) that this proposal was *implemented* nine days later by NSAM 263, and 2) that plenty of Kennedy's advisers were telling him that the war was *not* going well.

Cockburn keeps putting the word "victory" in Kennedy's mouth, but the question Kennedy was facing was, Should we fight this war for the South Vietnamese or not? If JFK's answer was no, what else could he have done than declare the mission accomplished and withdraw? This is not "victory" in Cockburn's sense, but most likely a ploy to get out without losing face. The alternative would have been immediate, complete withdrawal, making it obvious to the world that the US had abandoned an ally. But withdrawal by 1966 on the basis of having accomplished a limited military objective (not "victory") would have been politically tolerable. What else could he have said? "Sorry folks, I made a terrible mistake in trying to support this dictatorial South Vietnamese regime against their own people, so we're going home"? No. He *had* to say: "We've done what we can and all we promised to do, but it's their war, so we're going home."

Kennedy was not an idiot, but he would have to have been an idiot to have been deluded by "euphoric reports from the field," as Cockburn says he was. Many of the reports Kennedy received were anything but euphoric, and the White House statement of October 2 was not euphoric either:

> The political situation in South Viet-Nam remains deeply serious. The United States has made clear its continuing opposition to any repressive actions in South Viet-Nam [by the Diem brothers]. While such actions have not yet significantly affected the military effort, they could do so in the future.

Kennedy would have been a complete fool to have thought that "victory was in sight," as Cockburn and others suggest.

The fact remains that deluded or not deluded, Kennedy decided to withdraw. One can't have it both ways. One can't say that Kennedy was deluded into the withdrawal decision because he thought we were winning, on the one hand, and also say he didn't really mean it, that he was just playing politics. But this is exactly what Cockburn says: "There were also domestic political reasons for the adoption of such a course." What makes him think the political pressure to withdraw was greater than the pressure to escalate? JFK's own Cabinet, the Vice-President, the military, the CIA, and right-wing forces in Congress and in the general population were against withdrawal. That is why he told O'Donnell et al. that he should be re-elected before withdrawing, because he knew there was substantial opposition to it. The situation in Vietnam deteriorated so badly in the summer and fall, however, that he was forced to announce the withdrawal plan probably earlier than he would have liked.

Cockburn says that when Kennedy discussed withdrawal "a qualifier was always there." "Always" turns out to be on two occasions, neither of which supports the point. The first is a quote from "one Pentagon official" (who?) as saying (when?) that the withdrawal could begin "providing things go well" – as if what some anonymous person said sometime somewhere could be taken as a "qualifier" to what *Kennedy* thought or did in October 1963 or any other time. But time, as we have already seen, is a minor factor in Cockburn's sense of history, and in the next sentence we are taken back to the press conference on May 22, 1963, where Kennedy said:

> We are hopeful that the situation in Vietnam would permit some withdrawal in any case by the end of the year, but we can't possibly make that judgement at the present time. There is a long hard struggle to go.

I suppose it is the words "hopeful" and "some" that Cockburn takes as qualifiers. He fails to note, however, that October comes after May, or that this fact has any significance. In October, McNamara and Taylor expressed complete withdrawal not as a "hope" but as a *belief*:

> We believe that the U.S. part of the task can be completed by the end of 1965, the terminal date which we are taking as the time objective of our counterinsurgency programs (*NYT, Pentagon Papers*, p. 213).

The second "qualifier" Cockburn cites is contained in "the minutes to the discussion of NSAM 263." He gives no reference, but says these notes "have J.F.K. saying the same thing" – that the withdrawal "should be carried out routinely as part of our general posture of withdrawing people when they are no longer needed." Even if Kennedy actually said this, it does not say the same thing he said in May, nor does it "qualify" the withdrawal ordered by NSAM 263. It is perfectly compatible with the

"mission accomplished" posture. US troops were indeed no longer "needed" (as in truth they never were) in Vietnam unless they were going to fight the South Vietnamese's war for them, which NSAM 263 is clearly intended to prevent.

"And in implementing the withdrawal order," Cockburn continues, still apparently quoting from these anonymous minutes, "J.F.K. directed that 'no further reductions in U.S. strength would be made until the requirements of the 1964 [military] campaign were clear.'" But again, why does this "qualify" the withdrawal policy? The withdrawal was to be phased over the next two years and obviously would have to be done with consideration for the troops that would remain in country in the meantime. Instead of trying to support this foolish innuendo, Cockburn jumps back into his time machine to finish the paragraph:

> Remember that already by the end of 1961 J.F.K. had made the decisive initial commitment to military intervention, and that a covert campaign of terror and sabotage against the North was similarly launched under his aegis.

We cannot discuss NSAM 263, in other words, without remembering 1961, but who is suggesting that Kennedy's Vietnam policy was the same in 1961 as it was in late 1963? Mr. Cockburn. The truth is that Kennedy *changed his mind and reversed* his policy – from buildup to withdrawal – and after the assassination Johnson reversed it again. Cockburn implies that the "decisive initial commitment" was, though only "initial," also "decisive," that is, permanent. But Cockburn himself refers to NSAM 263 as "implementing the withdrawal order." How can the initial commitment in 1961 have been "decisive" if the opposite decision was implemented in October 1963?

In the following paragraph Cockburn again quotes an Administration official to represent what Kennedy supposedly thought, though this time at least the official is identified:

> On November 13, 1963, *The New York Times* published an interview with Michael Forrestal, a senior member of Kennedy's National Security Council, in which he said, "It would be folly...at the present time" to pursue "a negotiated settlement between North and South Vietnam."

To buttress this statement, Cockburn then quotes "J.F.K. himself" in his press conference the next day:

> We do have a new situation there, and a new government, we hope, an increased effort in the war....Now, that is our object, to bring Americans home, permit the South Vietnamese to maintain themselves as a free and independent country, and permit democratic forces within the country to operate – which they can of course, much more freely when the assault from the inside, and which is manipulated from the North, is ended. So the purpose of the meeting in Honolulu is how to pursue these objectives.

Cockburn's interpretation:

> Thus, J.F.K. was defining victory – to be followed by withdrawal of U.S. "advisers" – as ending the internal Communist assault in the South, itself manipulated from the North.

Again the word "victory," which is Cockburn's. The order of priorities – victory, then withdrawal – is also Cockburn's, not Kennedy's. The first objective Kennedy mentions is to bring Americans home. The last point is added almost as an afterthought: of course it would be *better* if the support of the North for the insurrection in the South could be ended. But it was clear to everyone, especially after the Buddhist uprisings in the summer, that the insurrection would continue even without support from the North unless post-Diem leadership emerged that the South Vietnamese themselves would be willing to fight for. This is what Kennedy meant when he said "We do have new situation there." The hope he expressed for "an increased effort in the war" was for an increased effort *by the South Vietnamese*!

Cockburn is implying the opposite – that Kennedy hoped for an increased war effort by the US, and that this was to be the topic of the Honolulu conference. There is no basis for this assumption. Apparently, there is still no reliable record of that conference, which is strange. Scott's conclusion, based on contemporary news reports and references to the meeting in the *Pentagon Papers*, is that the Accelerated Withdrawal Plan was confirmed, i.e. the reduction in military aid and troop withdrawals implemented by NSAM 263 on Oct. 11. Cockburn tells us the opposite:

> As Newman acknowledges, the upshot of the Honolulu meeting was that for "the first time" the "shocking deterioration of the war was presented in detail to those assembled, along with a plan to widen the war, while the 1,000-man withdrawal was turned into a meaningless paper drill.

The question appears unresolved. What was decided at Honolulu – to continue withdrawal or "widen the war"? In fact, Johnson's NSAM 273 did both – continued the withdrawal plan and increased covert military operations, but only the first of these contradictory policies was included in Kennedy's NSAM 263. That is what counts, especially since we do not know what happened at Honolulu, and there is no evidence that Kennedy knew either. In any case, he did not change his policy between Oct. 11 (NSAM 263) and Nov. 22.

Cockburn's next argument is based on McGeorge Bundy's draft of NSAM 273:

> The next day [after the Honolulu conference, i.e. Nov. 21], back in the White House, Bundy put the grim conclusions of the meeting into the draft language of NSAM 237 [sic; presumably 273], which, as he told Newman in 1991, he "tried to bring...in line with the words that Kennedy might want to say."

Cockburn assumes that Bundy's draft, whose first paragraph is almost identical with the first paragraph of Johnson's NSAM 273, proves that Kennedy would have said the same thing Johnson did. But there are several obvious questions he should be asking. First, why has this document, along with the other documents issuing from the Honolulu conference, remained classified so long? Second, why would Bundy draft the text of an important policy directive based on the results of a meeting which he had not yet even discussed with the president?

It is quite wrong to assume that Kennedy would have approved the language of this draft just because Bundy thinks he would have. Cockburn forgets that we are talking here about the possibility of a coup d'état. Bundy's motives and credibility are at least as suspect as Johnson's. He was a hawk on Vietnam from the word go and thus in the same camp as Johnson, Rusk, McNamara, and CIA director McCone. He had strong ties with the CIA through his brother William and his former professor at Yale, Richard Bissell, the CIA Director of Operations Kennedy fired after the Bay of Pigs, and through his job as National Security Adviser. As the president's personal liaison with the Director of Central Intelligence, who in turn represented the entire intelligence community, Bundy was the highest national security official to survive the presidential "transition" – the only person in a position under both Kennedy and Johnson to know all the nation's secrets. In short, if it was a coup, Bundy must have been in on it. If indeed he wrote the draft of NSAM on Nov. 21 (i.e., if it is not a falsification to confuse the "record"), he may have written it for Johnson.

Cockburn doesn't hesitate to call Kennedy a liar, but he takes Johnson at his word. Johnson said about his first presidential conference on Vietnam on Nov. 24, 1963, two days after the assassination:

> Most of the advisers agreed that we could begin withdrawing some of our advisers by the end of the year and a majority of them by the end of 1965.

Cockburn thinks this proves that "J.F.K. in the last days of his Administration, and L.B.J. in the first days of his, defined victory in the same terms, and both were under similar illusions." LBJ, whom O'Donnell, for example, portrays as a bald-faced liar on several occasions, could not possibly be lying! Again Cockburn puts the word "victory" in Kennedy's mouth, and ignores the question astutely raised by Scott: If there was no change of policy, why was Vietnam so important that it was the first order of business of the new president? If Johnson was under "similar illusions" as Kennedy, why did he say in his memoirs that he "felt a national security meeting was essential at the earliest possible moment" (quoted by Scott, p. 224)? This meeting was held on Sunday, Nov. 24, but Scott points out that according to the *Pentagon Papers* and the *New York Times* there was an even earlier meeting with McNamara, on Saturday morning, where a memo was discussed in which

> Mr. McNamara said that the new South Vietnamese government was confronted by serious financial problems, and that the U.S. must be prepared to raise planned MAP [Military Assistance Plan] levels (Scott, p. 225, quoting the Gravel edition).

First, this does not seem to be what was decided in Honolulu, where according to the *New York Times* the Accelerated Withdrawal Plan was finalized. Secondly, if this is what was decided in Honolulu, why did McNamara wait two full days without discussing it with Kennedy and discuss it with Johnson the morning after the assassination? Scott's conclusion that the withdrawal policy was in fact reversed immediately after the assassination clarifies both points.

Johnson's opinion on Vietnam was no different on Nov. 23 or 24 from what it was on August 31, 1963, when he said that "it would be a disaster to pull out...we

should once again go about winning the war" (*Pentagon Papers*, NYT, p. 205). This was also Bundy's, Rusk's, and McNamara's position. Kennedy was practically a minority of one in the upper echelons of his own Administration, as Maxwell Taylor has written. But as long as he was boss, his view prevailed. The McNamara-Taylor report Of Oct. 2, 1963, according to Fletcher Prouty, did not represent McNamara's view at all, and was not even written by him. It was written at the Pentagon according to Kennedy's wishes and handed over to McNamara and Taylor in Honolulu when they stopped there on their way back from Saigon, so that they could then hand it to the president in Washington as "their" report.

With Kennedy out of the picture, the hawks took over, reversing the withdrawal policy while maintaining the appearance of continuity.

Noam Chomsky is another radical leftist who is vehemently opposed to what he calls the "withdrawal thesis" ("Vain Hopes, False Dreams," *Z*, Oct. 1992). Like Cockburn, Chomsky says there was no withdrawal plan, only a "withdrawal on condition of victory" plan, and that arguments to the contrary are nothing more than JFK "hagiography." His argument is more rigorous than Cockburn's, but equally false.

First, it is wrong to assume that all biographers and assassination researchers are JFK hagiographers. One need not deny that Kennedy was as ruthless a cold warrior as any other president to acknowledge that he had decided to withdraw from Vietnam. Reagan's decision to withdraw from Lebanon doesn't make him a secret dove either.

Second, the withdrawal "thesis" is not a thesis but a fact, amply documented in the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers, as already discussed. Since Chomsky himself co-edited Vol. 5, it is surprising that he finds this fact so difficult to acknowledge.

The thesis which Chomsky, like Cockburn, is actually arguing against is his own formulation: that JFK wanted "withdrawal without victory." It is true that according to the record, the withdrawal plan was predicated on the *assumption* of military success. Chomsky, however, understands this as a *condition*. This is wrong. There is a substantial difference between saying "The military campaign is progressing well, and we should be able to withdraw by the end of 1965," which is how I read the McNamara-Taylor report and Kennedy's confirmation of it in NSAM 263, and "If we win the war, we will withdraw," which is how Chomsky reads the same documents.

We do not know what Kennedy may have secretly wanted or what he would have done if he had he lived. Whether he really believed the war was going well, as the record states, or privately knew it was not, as Newman contends, is also unknowable. What we do know, from the record, Chomsky notwithstanding, is that Johnson reversed the withdrawal policy officially sometime between December 1963 and March 1964.

The point, again, is crucial. If one manages to say, as Chomsky and Cockburn and the other authors discussed here do, that in truth there was no change in policy, that in fact there never was a withdrawal policy but only a policy of escalation and victory (until after Tet 1968), it means that Johnson and Nixon simply continued what Kennedy started. This, in turn, means that the question of the relation of the policy change (since there wasn't one) to the assassination does not arise.

If, however, one states the facts correctly, the question is unavoidable. Exactly when Johnson reversed the policy, and whether he did so because conditions changed,

or because perceptions of conditions changed, or for whatever reason, is beside the point. Why avoid the straightforward formulation, which is nothing but a summary of the PP Gravel account: JFK thought the military mission was being accomplished, so he planned to withdraw; Johnson decided that it wasn't, so he killed the withdrawal plan.

The reason is clear. Once you admit that there was a radical policy change in the months following the assassination, whether that change was a reaction to a (presumed) change in conditions or not, you must ask if the change was related to the assassination. Then, like it or not, you are into conspiracy theory, and conspiracy theory is anathema to the leftist or neo-Marxian tradition represented by Cockburn and Chomsky. There are historical reasons for this, of course, since conspiracy theories have been notoriously exploited by the fascist right. Nevertheless, it is as wrong to identify all conspiracy theories with the likes of Hitler and Goebbels as it is to identify Marxist theories with the likes of Stalin and Erich Honecker.

There is an alternative view. In this view, one accepts the fact of the policy change, but denies that it had anything to do with the assassination. It was mere coincidence that the policy change followed the assassination. This is a tenable position, but one that few seem comfortable with, and for a good reason: it is ludicrously naive. Nevertheless, it has apparently become Arthur Schlesinger's position, who reads Johnson's NSAM 273 as "reversing the Kennedy withdrawal policy" ("*JFK*: Truth and Fiction," *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 10, 1992). But, he adds, to connect the policy reversal with the assassination, as Stone and Garrison do, is "reckless, paranoid, really despicable fantasy..."

Despite Schlesinger's hysterical denials, the policy reversal is the most plausible motive for the assassination. Thus the biggest lie – the Lone Nut theory of history – requires another one: there was no policy reversal. It is astonishing that so many commentators of diverse political stripes have succumbed to this imperative.

CHAPTER THREE
Conspiracy and the Press

The general principles of media control in a (relatively) free society are no different than in other corporate enterprises. Horace Greeley's "guardians of freedom" are really lapdogs, and would no more bite the hand that feeds them than would the employees of IBM or General Motors.

The lapdog, however, masquerades as a watchdog. It is not a simple matter to demonstrate how the coverage, or non-coverage, of particular events serves government and business interests, which are generally identical. What can be shown, if we insist on asking the simplest questions, which are precisely those we are preconditioned not to ask, is how the press fails to serve the truth.

Some examples follow. They will require us to pay more attention to textual detail than we ordinarily do, but a close analysis suffices in a surprising number of cases to demonstrate the mechanisms of control. It does not reveal the who and why of the control, but it shows that it exists. It does not require a conspiracy theory. We do not need to demonstrate conspiracy to demonstrate control. This is an observation worth making. If the press is controlled, whether by conspiracy, by the natural workings of capitalism, or by Martians, it is not free.

1. The Watergate Coup: Nixon as Scapegoat

Watergate has been part of our political mythology for twenty years. It has become an article of faith, proving that not even presidents are safe from the ever vigilant watchdog press. And yet, who can explain why it was that the president, with all the secret powers of the intelligence agencies under his control, could not prevent a relatively trivial hotel break-in and his own tape recordings from destroying him?

Len Colodny and Robert Gettlin have suggested (*Silent Coup*, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1991) that Nixon was set up by his own people (Alexander Haig, John Dean, etc.), a thesis that is strong on how but weak on why. The reasons the authors suggest – the military's objections to Nixon's China and Vietnam policies – are not convincing. There was no significant change in US China policy after Nixon, and the ending of the Vietnam War had been decided much earlier, after the Tet offensive in 1968.

The thesis, though, that Watergate was a coup d'état, makes sense. If true, this coup was even more silent than the JFK assassination, because there hasn't been anybody at all until now, not even a wacko group of conspiracy buffs, saying that it happened. Assuming that it did, what could have been the reason?

I will suggest one – essentially the same one that killed Kennedy: Vietnam. Kennedy and Nixon were like parentheses around the war, encapsulating it, packaging it for the memory hole, to go down undigested. Kennedy had to go because he wouldn't start the war, and Nixon had to go because he couldn't end it.

Nixon did finally end the shooting, of course, but by the time he did the country was on the verge of revolution, which was a far greater threat to the powers-that-be than the Viet Cong, who were in fact never a threat at all. After being elected twice

on a "peace" platform, like Johnson before him, Nixon sent 20,000 more Americans to their deaths and was the only war president left, after Johnson died in 1973. No amount of Orwellian rhetoric, and certainly not from Nixon's mouth, could have disguised the fact that the U.S. government had lost the war, 58,000 men, and the respect of most of its citizens. The country was in turmoil. There was Kent State, Jackson State, the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, etc., and Nixon was everybody's target. Some blamed him for fighting, some for losing, some for both. His response, perhaps the only alternative given his character and the bind he was in, was to mobilize the secret police and prepare for all-out war with the population (see David Wise, *The American Police State*, NY: Random House, 1976). Others were smart enough to know this wouldn't work. Clamping the lid down on a boiling pot is the surest way to make it explode, as the plotters of the abortive coup in the Soviet Union learned in August 1991. Yet something had to happen. The war had gone on too long. Too many people were angry for too many reasons.

Watergate was the solution. It solved the problem of Nixon's increasingly overt fascism and at the same time provided the country with the scapegoat it sorely needed for the war. The high tragedy of Watergate had nothing directly to do with Vietnam, but Nixon's fall was the catharsis that was supposed to lay the war to rest, in order for the power structure that was responsible for it to remain intact. Watergate told America: "Look, we've got the bad guy. Maybe for the wrong reason, but what does it matter? See how far he's fallen. Basta. Forget it. No more recriminations, no more questions."

The questions this megadrama was supposed to stifle were the same ones that had been debated throughout the 60s but were never answered. They still have not been answered. Should the US have fought in Vietnam? The fact that we lost is not an answer. The Establishment's lame admission that the war was a "tragic mistake," i.e. a well-intentioned failure, is not an answer either. What were those intentions, whose were they exactly, and were they right or wrong?

Watergate put a moratorium on this debate, obviating the soul-wrenching but cleansing self-examination that any nation normally goes through after losing a war. For this was substituted a dramatic but essentially trivial exercise: the by now familiar "What did he (Nixon) know and when did he know it?" game. This was necessary because neither Nixon nor the power structure he represented could have survived the real debate, which was Vietnam. If the war was a "mistake," how could we have been so stupid? This "explanation," portraying US policy-makers as well-intentioned (and thus forgivable) bunglers simply doesn't wash, in the long run. Eventually, people would realize what most of the immediate victims of the war – the men who fought it – were forced to learn the hard way: they got screwed.

No government, and certainly not one that pretends to be a democracy, can survive this judgment, once enough citizens come to share it. Vietnam left an extraordinary number of Americans feeling just this way – warriors and draft dodgers alike. This is the real "Vietnam syndrome" – the failure to accept the utter wrongness, the immorality, of the war. As long as the policies that led to and pursued the war are not understood and condemned, the individual is left to wrestle with his own conscience. The public debate which should have continued and been resolved was deliberately aborted, making the individual's struggle to understand and come to terms

with the events he was caught up in vastly more difficult. It is not acceptable, even today, to say that the United States is guilty of genocide against both the Vietnamese and American people. This is an unthinkable thought. The ruling elite could not, and cannot, allow it because it would correctly identify them, and not the Viet Cong, as the enemy. It cannot be acknowledged because the power structure, and to some extent the same individuals, that gave us Vietnam are still firmly in place.

Compare the situation in Germany. Why don't the Germans have a "World War II syndrome"? How did Hitler's veterans, the instruments and victims of Nazi policies, come to terms with themselves and postwar German society? Because they *knew* they had been screwed, and their view of reality has accorded with the mainstream postwar culture. Germans today (except for a few unreconstructed Nazis) have a clear relationship to their history, having lost their war but gained, as a forced consequence, their revolution. We lost our war but never got our revolution. We got Watergate instead. The Germans were able to regenerate, individually and collectively, because they could put their past behind them. We cannot. Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War have made it abundantly clear that not much has changed since Vietnam, except that now we are "winning." The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964 was followed by the Persian Gulf Resolution of Jan. 12, 1991, with Congress again abdicating its constitutional responsibility, despite the War Powers Act. The spineless congressional majority was considerably slimmer in 1991 than it was in 1964, which offers some grounds for hope, but it is still a majority.

It is a clear indication of how superficial Watergate was and how little things have changed, and almost amusing, to see Nixon and his chief intellectual henchman, Kissinger, having risen like phoenixes from the charnel house of Vietnam to play the role of elder statesman today. Henry's stony visage and robotic voice, as if played back by remote control, are ubiquitous when foreign policy is discussed. On MacNeil-Lehrer he urges "surgical strikes" against Iraq, the same advice he gave Nixon about Vietnam and Cambodia, resulting in more bombs dropped in Vietnam than in all previous American wars, and which will no doubt wreak comparable devastation in Iraq.

Kissinger writes in *Newsweek* (9/2/91:44):

> As for the United States, it should take care to avoid getting involved in these internal Soviet disputes. It must be seen to support principles, not personalities.

Substituting "Vietnamese" for "Soviet," the hypocrisy is astounding. On the next page he says:

> Evoking a foreign danger has served as a means of suppressing differences between nationalities. No European country has sent its armies abroad as frequently and with such missionary zeal as the Russian Empire.

Again, the hypocrisy is mind-boggling, a veritable mirror-image of the truth. He should have written:

> Evoking a foreign danger has served as a means of suppressing differences between social classes and ethnic groups. No country has sent its armies abroad as frequently and with such missionary zeal as the United States of America.

As a case in point, one wonders how the civil rights movement would have developed without the distraction of Vietnam. Was it mere coincidence that Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were murdered in the summer of 1968, not long after both had finally declared their opposition to the war? The prospect of a coalition of blacks, the poor, and middle-class antiwar whites must have sent a shiver up the backs of the ruling class. This threat was met in the same way as Kennedy's decision (in October 1963) to pull out of Vietnam: with gunfire, followed by the Lone Nut theory of history.

RFK and Martin Luther King had to go too, since they would have not only ended the war prematurely, i.e. before the last penny of the $570 billion "costs" (= income; in 1991 dollars, cf. *Newsweek* 2/4/91, p. 45)) could be pocketed by the "defense" (= war) contractors, but they also had the charisma and popular support to shake the power structure to its very bones. Hoover had done his dirty best against King, but it wasn't enough, and Marilyn's skeleton, which had been planted in Robert's closet, didn't seem adequate to the job either. The more drastic alternative, assassination, became necessary again. This was dangerous, but as we have seen, it worked. The revolution was decapitated.

Watergate spared Nixon this fate. Phlebitis and humiliation are better than getting blown away. And he still has his friends, such as *Time* magazine, where he said in the April 2, 1990 issue:

> Q. Some people say that...in 1969 you could have gotten just about what you got in the end – a kind of a decent interval, the North Viet Nam army's forces in place in the South, POW's – and that therefore the price in American lives was way too high.
> A. I know that argument, and I don't agree with it. Kissinger and I have often talked about that. And there, we have to look at the intricacies of the peace agreement of '73. Had that agreement been implemented as it was, it would be a very different situation than it is at the present time.
>
> But as you know, there were two aspects of the agreement. One has been totally forgotten. The two aspects were: one, that the U.S. would continue to support South Viet Nam, just as the Soviets would be expected to be supporting North Viet Nam. The other was that the U.S., in the event that the North Vietnamese complied with the terms, would also support them economically. In other words, there was the economic package.
>
> Naturally, this is self-serving, but everything I say is self-serving. But had I survived, I think that it would have been possible to have implemented the agreement. South Viet Nam would still be a viable non-Communist enclave or whatever you want to call it. But because I think that I had enormous credibility with the North – because of what I'd done on May 8 [ordering the mining of North Vietnamese ports], because of what I'd done in December [ordering the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong] – they thought, Well, this unpredictable so-and-so, we can't be sure if we attack. You've got to remember, too, that the peace agreement worked for two years.

"Self-serving" is right. There is a streak of honesty in the man. His rendition of the "intricacies" of the Paris Agreements, however, resembles neither what the documents actually say nor what he and Kissinger said at the time.

Article 1 of the Paris Agreements did not stipulate "that the U.S. would continue to support South Vietnam" (which never existed as a country for the majority of Vietnamese – that's what the war was all about) but the exact opposite: that "the United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, *unity and territorial integrity* of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam" (see Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, NY: Pantheon, 1988, p. 230-231).

The text of the agreements clearly recognizes two South Vietnamese political parties, the GVN (Thieu and followers) and the PRG (= NLF = Viet Cong = the Vietnamese who opposed the U.S.-puppet regime), which were to reconcile their differences through negotiations and without foreign interference, committing themselves to a total withdrawal of all "troops, military advisers, and military personnel including technical military personnel, armaments, munitions, and war material" (Articles 5, 7, 13).

On the same day the agreements were announced (Jan. 24, 1973), Kissinger violated them by pledging at a press conference to maintain "civilian technicians" in South Vietnam to "handle maintenance, logistics, and training jobs formerly performed by the U.S. military." The day before, Nixon did the same by announcing that the GVN would be recognized as the "sole legitimate government in South Vietnam." The South Vietnamese then proceeded to violate the cease-fire, since Thieu could not have won a fair election in 1973 any more than Diem could have in 1954.

The January agreements were essentially identical with the 9-Point Plan arrived at in October, but negotiations were delayed until after the November presidential election to avoid an "October Surprise" – the end of the war, which would work to peacenik George McGovern's advantage. This allowed Nixon to indulge in the Christmas bombings which he says gave him such "enormous credibility with the North," a statement of enormous incredibility, since the terms agreed to in 1973 were no different in substance from what the North had wanted in the early 60s and what the Geneva Accords had provided for in 1954. Nixon's explanation for why he delayed the Paris Agreements until after the election is astonishingly forthright:

> I felt we would be in a much stronger position after the election, after a tremendous mandate, after the antiwar crowd had been totally defeated. I thought that then we could really get these people to, shall we say, cry uncle.

Here we have pure Nixon, the real man. The true enemy is not the Vietnamese, but the American people. If the "antiwar crowd" had been a minority this would be bad enough, but by 1973 it comprised a majority of the population. Nixon wanted them "totally defeated"!

What Nixon apparently still fails to see, but which his handlers in the Watergate era did see, is that "free" societies are not controlled by "totally defeating the enemy," i.e. the people. That is the strategy of dictatorship, which only works up to a point, namely to the point where the people refuse to be defeated and revolt. The techniques of control in a relatively open society are far more sophisticated. A "free" people must

actually be free to a certain extent, and more importantly, they must *believe* they are free.

Watergate served this purpose magnificently. Ask anyone about some suspected cover-up, some scandal which has not been covered by the mainstream press in any proportion to its importance, and he will remind you: "But just look at Watergate: they brought down a president! If there's a shred of evidence, the press will dig it up."

The Watergate myth is particularly effective because the disproportion between Nixon's purported crime (covering up his staff's role in the break-in) and his punishment (resignation to avoid impeachment) is so great that we must ask: If the press can bring down a president for something like this, how could more serious crimes possibly go unexposed? The myth of the free press thus gains new strength while the dauntless "guardians of freedom" fail to pursue questions such as: Why was the break-in bungled so badly by seasoned CIA veterans who had to know better? Were they meant to get caught? Should we take the CIA's word that their ex-employees (does anybody ever really retire from the CIA?) were working directly for the White House and not for the agency? If Colodny and Gettlin are right about the *Washington Post's* Bob Woodward working with Haig and the others who set Nixon up, is it reasonable to suppose that such intrigue would be possible without the cooperation or knowledge of the CIA, which has a long history of "working with" the press?

It is inconceivable to me that Watergate could have happened at all if the CIA had been under Nixon's control, as it was supposed to be. By law the CIA is accountable to one man alone: the president. Nixon made the final decisions about what threatened the "national security" or not, and surely he would have considered his own tar and feathering as such a threat. How did the tapes survive? Why didn't he simply have the CIA and FBI do their job – which they are very good at – and get rid of them?

The lesson of Watergate, in case we have forgotten about Dallas, is that the president does not have a secret police, which would be bad enough, so much as they have him – and us as well, of course.

2. The black budget

The simplest way to avoid asking a question is to treat the answer as given. We have seen a good example of this in Alexander Cockburn's approach to the assassination: the question of conspiracy is insignificant because there was no conspiracy. The first question, Was there a conspiracy?, is never asked, much less answered.

This is especially common with figures, because no matter how wildly inaccurate they are, "figures don't lie." People do, though. For example, somehow, somewhere, the figure of $30 billion for the US intelligence budget was added to the menu of lies the corporate media present for public consumption. I saw the figure first in *Time* magazine:

> About half of the classified fund, estimated at $30 billion for 1990, is earmarked for tactical and military intelligence. The CIA, NSA, DIA and civilian intelligence groups share the remainder (4/23/90).

Note that it suffices to cite the figure, which, despite the "estimated," perseveres from publication to publication without anyone stopping to ask who made the estimation and how. This "information" from the world's largest magazine, published by the world's largest media conglomerate, was seemingly confirmed the same year in a book published by another Time Warner company, which put the intelligence bill plus the cost of all other secret programs hidden in the Pentagon budget at $34-36 billion:

> But I can say with assurance that the black budget peaked at about $36 billion a year in 1988 and 1989. This year, in the fiscal 1991 Pentagon request, the declassification of the costs of the Stealth bomber and MILSTAR [a military satellite system designed to coordinate a protracted nuclear war] brought the black budget back down toward $34 billion (Tim Weiner, *Blank Check*, NY: Warner Books, 1990, p. 16).

A year and a half later, *Newsweek* can mention "the $30 billion annual U.S. intelligence budget" (9/9/91:20) in passing, treating it as an established truth.

$100 million of taxpayers' money spent secretly every day, 365 days a year, is bad enough. But if Big Brother's mouthpieces are set on having us swallow this much, we can be sure the whole truth is even less palatable. Beyond the unmentionable fact that *any* secret government budget violates the Constitution, inviting abuse and tyranny, the few reliable sources available on the subject indicate a figure much higher than $30 billion, which leads to the suspicion that *Time's* anonymous source was the CIA public relations office. If that is true, it is obvious why the source isn't mentioned: it would discredit the "information."

I will propose a different figure, which may also be inaccurate, but at least I will be honest enough to say how I arrived at it.

In *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (NY: Alfred Knopf, 1974, p. 61, 81) Victor Marchetti and John Marks put the overall intelligence budget at $6.228 billion for 1973, of which the CIA disposed of $750 million. Sean Gervasi extrapolates from this and other sources to arrive at an estimated $1.5 billion CIA budget for 1978 (*Covert Action Information Bulletin* 7, 12/9-1/80, p. 18), which would put the overall budget at $12.456 billion, according to Marchetti and Marks' analysis of the distribution of funds among the various agencies.

This figure of $12.456 billion for 1978 is a conservative estimate, since according to David Wise the overall budget was already at $12 billion in 1975:

> In 1975 the entire CIA budget was hidden within a $2 billion appropriation for "Other Procurement, Air Force." The $12 billion total for all U.S. intelligence, much higher than previous estimates, was indicated in the report of the Senate intelligence committee" (*The American Police State*, 1976, NY: Random House, p. 185).

The figure of $12.456 for 1978 represents an increase of exactly 100% over a period of five years (1973-78). This corresponds remarkably well to *Newsweek's* report in 1983

that the CIA budget had increased at a rate of 17% annually since 1980 (10/10/83:30). The following figures, then, suggest themselves:

Year	Overall Intelligence	CIA
1973	$6.228 billion	$0.75 billion
1978	12.456 billion	1.5 billion
1983	24.912 billion	3 billion
1988	49.824 billion	6 billion
1993	99.648 billion	12 billion

The figures for 1991 would be approximately $83.04 billion (overall) and $10 billion (CIA). This conforms with a 1990 estimate of the CIA budget at $10-12 billion by the editors of *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, a journal that specializes in intelligence affairs (35, Fall 1990, p. 2).

If Marchetti and Marks' breakdown is still correct, about 34.7% of the CIA's budget is spent on covert action. This is supplemented indirectly by about 60% of the allocations officially designated for the Science and Technology and Administration directorates. About one-third of these direct and indirect covert action funds go for media and propaganda activities.

Following this schema, Gervasi estimates the total cost of covert propaganda in 1978 to be $265 million. This is about $10 million more than the combined budgets of Reuters, U.P.I., and A.P. for that year.

The same calculation for 1991 would put CIA propaganda expenditures at $1.767 billion. This makes the CIA a major media mogul. For comparison, in 1989, Time Warner, the worldwide No. 1 media mogul, had total sales of $7.642 billion. *Time* magazine, which has the largest circulation of any periodical, had revenue in 1989 of $373.4 million. These figures can be compared to a estimated CIA propaganda budget of $1.237 billion for the same year. In other words, the CIA's propaganda budget is more than three times that of *Time*.

The structure of the CIA (especially with the addition of a fifth economics directorate) and the intelligence community has changed since 1973, but since there is little else to go on, let us see, just out of curiosity, what Marchetti and Marks' breakdown might look like in 1991:

Intelligence Agency		**1991 Estimated Budget (in $ millions)**
State Department		107
Treasury Department		133
Atomic Energy Commission		267
FBI		533
Defense Intelligence Agency		2,667
CIA		10,000
Director	133	
Intelligence	933	
Administration	1,467	
Science and Technology	1,600	
Operations	5,867	
National Security Agency		16,000
National Reconnaissance Office and Military Intelligence		53,333
Total		**83,040**

Having said this much, I must admit that none of these figures mean very much. The CIA budget, for example, whatever it is, does not include two other sources of income which are virtually limitless: proprietaries and transfers of funds (as well as men and materiel) from other government agencies. In 1973, Marchetti and Marks tell us that the CIA was "the owner of one of the biggest – if not the biggest – fleets of 'commercial' airplanes in the world" (p. 137). The profits from such proprietaries – companies secretly owned or controlled by the CIA – disappear without a trace into the black hole of non-accountable CIA coffers. To add insult to injury, much of this money comes from government contracts, so that the taxpayer ends up paying twice for his secret police – first through black budget appropriations (hidden in defense and other allocations), and secondly by government contracts awarded to CIA proprietaries. For example, in 1972 Southern Air Transport, a CIA proprietary, had a $2 million AID contract to fly relief supplies to Bangladesh; the next year, Air America, another well-known CIA proprietary airline, received $41.4 million worth of DOD contracts ((Marchetti and Marks, p. 142).

The legal basis for this robbery is the CIA Act of 1949, which states, in blatant violation of the US Constitution:

> (a) Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, sums made available to the Agency by appropriation or otherwise may be expended for purposes necessary to carry out its functions, including – (1) personal services, including personal services without regard to limitations on types of persons to be employed...(2) supplies, equipment, and personnel and contractual services otherwise authorized by law and regulations, when approved by the Director.

> (b) The sums made available to the Agency may be expended without regard to the provisions of law and regulations relating to the expenditure of Government funds; and for objects of a confidential, extraordinary, or emergency nature, such expenditures to be accounted for solely on the certificate of the Director... (Par. 403j).

In other words, the CIA can spend its money however it likes and doesn't have to tell anybody about it, the Constitution be damned. The "provisions of law" which this law annihilates are the right of the taxpayer to know what the government is doing with his money, a right which the framers of the Constitution thought they were establishing when they wrote:

> No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time (Article 1, Section 9).

The sums "otherwise" made available to the CIA include, besides income from proprietaries, what L. Fletcher Prouty calls "horizontal financing," which is also anchored in the unconstitutional CIA Act and allows the CIA to

> ...transfer to and receive from other government agencies such sums as may be approved by the Office of Management and Budget, for the performance of any functions or activities authorized...and any government agency is authorized to transfer or receive from the agency such sums without regard to any provisions of law limiting or prohibiting transfers between appropriations. Sums transferred to the agency in accordance with this paragraph may be expended for the purposes and under the authority...of this title without regard to limitations of appropriations from which transferred (CIA Act, 1949, quoted by Prouty, *The Secret Team*, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. 383).

In other words, millions or billions of dollars appropriated by congress for one purpose can easily end up being used by the CIA for something quite different. Prouty knows from his personal experience of many years as Air Force liaison officer with the CIA that terms like "authorization" in practice mean little, since

> …under high classification few people know that this is going on, and few want to become involved even if they find out. Also, the Agency works long and hard to get its own people, or entirely sympathetic people, into the key jobs where such things as this take place, and they see that the controls of the law do not bind at any point (Prouty, p. 383).

We are talking here about funds that are acquired legally, since the CIA Act, however unconstitutional, is law. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. The myriad financial scandals (Iran-contra, S & L, BCCI, BNL) in which the CIA is endlessly implicated but never nailed (an Ollie North scapegoat or two normally sufficing to quell the outrage of the corporate media) provide an occasional glimpse of the shadowy network of ties between the CIA and legal and illegal industry (e.g. drug trafficking). The CIA's pork barrel is not only black and bottomless but directly connected to huge

reservoirs of legitimate and illegitimate private capital, creating a coalition of secret power that is staggering to contemplate.

3. Alfred Herrhausen – terrorist victim?

This was published in 1990 in Lies of Our Times 1.7, 4-5.

The murder of Alfred Herrhausen, chairman of the Deutsche Bank, on Nov. 30, 1989, has been treated from the beginning as an open-and-shut case by the media on both sides of the Atlantic: the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion) did it. Everyone knows the RAF did it, but if you ask them how they know, all they can say is they read it in the paper or heard it on TV. The fact is that there is next to no evidence whatsoever for this contention, in the papers or anywhere else.

The first problem in questioning this foregone conclusion is that one can be easily accused of defending a terrorist group which has been German Public Enemy No. 1 for the past 16 years. This is like appearing to defend Saddam Hussein if you're against the Gulf War.

Nevertheless, the evidence is thin. The only witness who claimed to have direct knowledge of RAF involvement turned out to be a government informer whose testimony was totally discredited. Otherwise, there is a letter of confession found at the scene of the bombing, and another a letter written in October 1989 by Helmut Pohl (not to be confused with the German chief of state), an imprisoned RAF leader, and intercepted by German authorities. In the letter, according to *Der Spiegel* (Dec. 4, l989), Pohl says "We must orient ourselves to a new phase of the struggle" and "strike at the mechanism which makes everything work."

As head of the biggest German bank, Herrhausen was certainly a key figure in the "mechanism," and after the opening of the border on Nov. 9, and of Eastern Europe in general, he was in a particularly powerful position to influence these massive changes. Shortly before his death he announced Deutsche Bank's purchase of the British investment bank Morgan Grenfell for 2.7 billion marks, which *Spiegel* calls "the most important strategic decision of the Deutsche Bank since World War II," giving them a bridgehead in London, still the most important European center for international banking.

But Herrhausen was controversial as well as powerful. Buried on p. 9 of the 10-page *Spiegel* article is a brief explanation of why:

> Some of the things Herrhausen said and did do not fit in the simple leftist image of the ugly capitalist enemy. For example, he was the first prominent Western banker to propose publicly, two years ago, that the debt crisis in the Third World could not be solved without a partial waiver of claims by the Western creditor banks. This was also clear at the time to most other heads of banks, but they would have preferred to keep it to themselves a while longer.

No one thought to ask if this might be the key to his murder. Herrhausen supported the strategy of debt reduction, as opposed to re-financing ("fresh money"), strongly and consistently. His detailed proposal was published in the German financial newspaper *Handelsblatt* on June 6, 1989, and repeated in a presentation to the annual

meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington on Sept. 25, 1989. In the latter he remarked: "Mr. Reed, speaking for Citibank, has said they are a 'new money' bank. I can tell you that the Deutsche Bank is a 'debt reduction' bank." In the same speech, he pointed out that a major obstacle to his proposed debt reduction strategy is that Japanese and American banks would find it more difficult than their European counterparts to partially compensate for their losses through tax adjustments.

The *New York Times* of Dec. 8, 1989, printed portions of a speech which Herrhausen was to give in New York on Dec. 4 at the American Council on Germany. The entire speech was published in German on the same day in *Die Zeit*. The comparison is revealing.

The original manuscript is in English (which I obtained from the public relations office of Deutsche Bank), and the title is "New Horizons in Europe." The *Times* excerpt, about half the length of the original, is entitled "Toward a Unified Germany." This is already a gross misrepresentation. It is clear, even in what the *Times* printed, that Herrhausen is not pleading for unification. In fact, he is refreshingly cautious on this point, in contrast to the increasingly strident media campaign Germans East and West had been subjected to in the preceding months. He says that if the East Germans decide to join the West, fine, but

> At this point, the question is still very much an open question. [This sentence was omitted in the *Times*.] Secondly, such an endeavour would be a difficult and certainly a long process in view of the large economic and social differences that exist today.

Henry Kissinger appeared on German television at around the same time predicting unification within 5 years. Herrhausen was figuring on at least 10 years. The reader of the NYT cannot know this, however, because the following paragraph was excised from the middle of the portion of the speech printed by the *Times*:

> Of course, the process [of transforming a socialist society into a capitalistic one] could and should be managed in stages and it should be closely coordinated with price and currency reform. Price, currency and property reform would mean profound changes throughout society in Eastern Germany. Many people in the East, including some of the leaders of the present opposition groups, are already worried about the social costs of such adjustment. The rewards would certainly not accrue instantaneously. However, I am convinced that, given an adequate economic environment in the East and pertinent support by the West, the East German as well as the other Eastern economies could achieve impressive growth. I believe the GDR in particular could then catch up on the Western standard of living in about ten years or so.

More importantly, the *Times* excerpt also omits Herrhausen's discussion of the same proposals for debt reduction and in-country development banks which he had made to the World Bank and the IMF in September. These proposals, coming from a man in his position, are surely the most newsworthy items in the speech. Why did the *Times* find them unfit to print? Herrhausen refers here to Poland, but the same could apply to other highly indebted countries:

> In the past, the banks have agreed to regular reschedulings, but now the onus is on government lenders assembled in the Paris Club [a committee representing creditor nations that meets in Paris to deal with debt problems of individual countries] to come up with a helpful contribution. They account for roughly two-thirds of the country's external debt. If there is to be a permanent solution, this will require enlarging the strategies hitherto adopted to include a reduction of debt or debt service.

As an alternative to the European Development Bank proposed by France, Herrhausen proposes

> ... the establishment of a development bank on the spot, that is in Warsaw. Its job would be to bundle incoming aid and deploy it in accordance with strict efficiency criteria. I could well imagine that such an institution might be set up along the lines of the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, the Reconstruction Loan Corporation, whose origin goes back to the Marshall plan.
>
> Representatives of the creditor countries should hold the majority in the management board of this new institution. Such a Polish "Institute for Economic Renewal" (IER), as it could be called would have two functions: it should help and monitor. Since both these functions can only be exercised in close cooperation with the Polish authorities and with Polish trade and industry, genuine involvement on the part of the Institute in the Polish economy and the country's development process would be absolutely essential. It could be set up "until further notice" or come under Polish control after a transitional period. By channeling Western "help towards self-help" in the right directions, the Institute could play a constructive role in economic reform. Similar institutions could of course be established for other countries.

These are eminently sensible ideas, but it is not difficult to imagine that they would encounter powerful opposition, much more powerful than the likes of Helmut Pohl. No matter how you put it, for the creditors, debt reduction means giving away money. And of course it is sensible to put the lending bank "on the spot," since this would keep the repaid capital and interest in the country where it is needed, but this is not the way the big international banks make money.

Herrhausen may have been a terrorist victim. The question is: Who are the terrorists?

4. Stopping Saddam

In a review of a spy novel by David Ignatius, who is also a veteran reporter for the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek* describes the author's "expertise in navigating the darker corridors of intelligence tradecraft" as "awesome" (8/26/91:48). Such expertise may be the sine qua non of the successful newshound these days. Here is an example.

Ignatius was on C-Span last December (12/31/90) when a caller from Hickory, North Carolina, complete with accent, made the following astute remarks:

> In reference to the call about the U.S. creating a government to control the oil fields [in Kuwait], we only have to reinstate the former one, which we already

> control. The primary reason we're defending Kuwait is economic. President Bush's ties to the oil industry are well known. The primary beneficiaries of this whole affair are our own oil companies and the OPEC producers. A war will be profitable for everyone involved in the oil business, except Iraq. They're already warning us of $100-a-barrel oil, which, considering the fact that an oil shortage is not likely, even in the case of hostilities, will mean profits will multiply. The U.S. oil companies have shown no inclination to absorb any costs or limit their profits.

Ignatius responded:

> Well, I, you know, I may be naive, but I don't tend to think that conspiracy theories fit the way politics works in the United States. We're just not good at conspiracies when we try them. I do think that what the caller says is interesting and worth thinking about. In the end, I suppose he's right, that the arguments, the powerful arguments, for going to war here are economic.

These dark corridors have been navigated expertly indeed. "In the end," the caller is right. But first of all he is a conspiracy theorist, so he is wrong. The word "conspiracy" comes from Ignatius, but who notices that? Big Oil profits? Conspiracy theory, ergo ridiculous. Ignatius continues:

> When they sat down that weekend after the Aug. 2 invasion, we're told that what really haunted the president and his advisors was this idea of half the world's oil under the control of Saddam, that that was an intolerable situation. They did think back to Carter, to the way the country felt in the late seventies, and they said, 'We can't have this again.' So I think it did begin with this economic rationale. The notion that the oil companies are going to benefit over time, even in a period of high prices, in a way that would justify the president taking these risks – I don't – I think is wrong.

Now let us understand this correctly. Actually, the Bushmen did want to go to war over oil, and the oil companies will benefit, "even" if prices are high (would profits be higher if prices were lower?) – but not "in a way that would justify" war. So again, Ignatius is saying, the caller is right, but wrong. His straightforward observation, though correct, has been turned into a conspiracy theory, which is wrong.

Of course the oil companies were among the primary beneficiaries of the war, of course Bush is an oil man, and of course he is in their pocket. Big Oil is one of the biggest fish in the sea. What president could defy them and not get his head shot off, like Jack Kennedy? But Big Oil was not the only beneficiary. Where did the $40 billion "cost" of the war go? The answer to this question would give us the list of beneficiaries.

One was the military. The shift from East-West, high-intensity military planning to a North-South, middle and low-intensity strategy was in motion long before Saddam's invasion, which fell neatly into the middle-intensity category. The invasion of Kuwait provided just the push that was needed to stop the talk about "peace dividends" and defense budget cuts which could be heard in Congress as late as July, 1990, and which would have been disastrous for the new strategic initiatives. The Pentagon could not have asked for a more convenient crisis.

The banks also benefited. When the Iran-Iraq war ended in August, 1988, with both countries devastated, a million dead, and both sides having received a steady flow of weaponry from the US and other countries, Iraq was in debt for more than $65 billion. Half of that was owed to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who might have written it off in appreciation of Saddam's containment of Iran, but the Western banks were not about to relinquish their $26 billion, nor the Eastern bloc countries their $10 billion. In June, 1989, an organization called the US-Iraq Business Forum, headed by Robert Abboud and including a representative of Kissinger Associates (Alan Stoga), met with Saddam to discuss the financing of Iraq's development program. The conditions for new loans would be the privatization of Iraq's oil industry and the mortgaging of part of it as collateral to the banks. Saddam refused. Now, as a result of the war, 30% of Iraq's oil revenue is in the hands of the UN, which is tantamount to being in the hands of US and international banks.

Ignatius doth protest too much. There is in fact a good case for conspiracy in the Gulf War. In April, 1990, Congress voted to impose economic sanctions on Iraq, largely because of Saddam's supposed chemical attack on the Kurds in Halabja the previous month, despite a U.S. Army War College report that Iran was more likely responsible for this attack and that sanctions against Iraq would be a provocative and dangerous mistake. At the same time, Kuwait was insisting on $13-per-barrel oil and draining the Rumaila oil field, 95% of which is in Iraq, effectively strangling Iraq's only source of revenue. Massive debt, no new credit, no significant revenue, and, according to Saddam, border violations on the part of the Kuwaitis and United Arab Emirates, and a media campaign against him in the US – these were the subjects of his talk with the US ambassador, April Glaspie, on April 25. Glaspie agreed about the media:

> These are the methods the Western media employ. I am pleased that you add your voice to the diplomats who stand up to the media. Because your appearance in the media, even for five minutes, would help us to make the American people understand Iraq. This would increase mutual understanding. If the American President had control of the media, his job would be much better (*New York Times*, 9/23/90).

As for the border dispute and what Saddam saw as aggression on the part of Kuwait and the U.A.E., Glaspie and the US government were well aware at this point that Saddam had "deployed massive troops in the south." Saddam asked the US not to encourage Kuwait, "not to express your concern in a way that would make an aggressor believe that he is getting support for his aggression..." Clearly, the invasion was imminent, and clearly, Glaspie, speaking for the US, could have warned him not to do it. Instead, she bent over backward to let Saddam believe the US would not intervene:

> We have no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts such as your border dispute with Kuwait. I was with the American Embassy in Kuwait in the 60s. We were told then that we should express no opinion about this question and that it doesn't concern America. James Baker told our official spokesman to emphasize these instructions.

On top of all this are the revelations by Representative Henry Gonzalez that the Bush administration continued to approve guaranteed loans to Iraq up to the eve of the invasion, despite clear indications that these so-called "agricultural" loans were being converted for military purposes.

If this was not conspiracy, it was sandbagging par excellence, and I don't see the difference. In any case, one does not have to be a conspiracy theorist to doubt the prevailing assumptions – that Saddam would have invaded no matter what Glaspie had said, that economic sanctions would never have worked to get him out of Kuwait, and that war profits accruing to the military-industrial-finance complex do not influence policy.

5. Not Stopping Saddam

When the euphoria after the Gulf War began to die down, Bush found himself confronted with the problem of explaining why, after supposedly winning the war against the Hitler of Baghdad, who had been itching to drop A-bombs on Tel Aviv, Saddam was still alive and still had his bombs.

Newsweek (NW) came to the rescue a year later (1/20/92). The problem had to be dealt with, since it "leaves a sour taste in the mouths of many American military people" (p. 12). The specific question was: Why were the allied forces stopped "just a few miles short of their final objective," thus allowing two divisions of the elite Iraqi Republican Guard to escape northward, taking their tanks and helicopters with them"?

Piling contradiction upon contradiction, after nine pages of discussion NW wonders "how much difference it all made" (p. 19). This is "the unanswered (and perhaps unanswerable) question," but lo and behold, NW does have an answer: "...it is unlikely that the capture of only two divisions at Basra would have spelled certain doom for Saddam Hussein." Why, then, do "many senior U.S. military officers and civilian officials believe that decision [the cease-fire on Feb. 28] was a mistake" (12)? Why does NW itself refer to the early end of the war as a "lost opportunity" (13)? And finally, why spend nine pages analyzing this "mistake," if it was of no consequence anyway?

It was of consequence, of course, particularly for the Kurds and Shiites that the CIA had encouraged to rebel and that Saddam then proceeded to murder with just those Republican Guard troops and helicopter gunships that the allies allowed to escape. Why did Bush CIA encourage these rebellions if he didn't mean to support them? Why did he allow Saddam, under the terms of the cease-fire, to fly his helicopters, although the rest of his air force was grounded? Were these also "mistakes"?

NW doesn't ask. Nor does NW ask why Bush reluctantly decided in April to change course again and send the troops back in to protect the Kurds from further decimation. NW has no curiosity about the fact that this decision came one day after the *New York Times* published Gary Sick's article reviving the October Surprise story, which hangs over Bush's head like a Damocles sword.

NW's task is clear. In the wake of such puzzling inconsistencies, the public must be made to understand how it is possible to win a war and lose it at the same time.

King George mounted his white horse (several thousand miles behind the front lines) to slay the dragon, wins, declares victory for "the rule of law," victory over Saddam, victory in the Cold War, and victory over the Vietnam syndrome. A year later, the dragon is still spewing fire. The public is stupid, but not that stupid: Did we win or didn't we?

Of course we won. If Saddam is not out of our lives yet, it cannot be George Bush's fault. After all, this is an election year. A scapegoat is needed. Eeny, meeny, miney mo, catch Colin Powell by the toe.

Powell (understandably) refused to be interviewed by NW for this article, but NW reports that he told the president it would be "unchivalrous" to continue massacring the retreating Iraqis. Powell was "stirred by images from the 'Highway of Death'" (12). It does not occur to NW that Powell may have been thinking less about chivalry than about the Code of War and the Geneva Conventions.

In addition to chivalry, NW suggests three reasons why Powell called for the cease-fire and thus screwed everything up. First, incompetence. "Powell is widely criticized for misjudging the situation on the ground and failing to report it accurately to Bush" (13). We are not told what he is supposed to have misjudged. Schwarzkopf, "who by law reported directly to the president," also takes his knocks. He "had at least two opportunities to express his misgivings to Washington and failed to do so."

Neither of these accusations is credible. NW would have us believe the chairman of the Joint Chiefs failed to understand a patently obvious military situation, and that the commanding general of the operation, though presumably understanding the situation, failed or refused to report accurately to the commander-in-chief – and, presumably, to Powell, since otherwise Powell would have "understood" the situation.

The second reason NW offers is panic. This time it is not only Powell but also the White House "overreacting" to reports of the damage done to the retreating Iraqis (p. 17). The cause for this panic is not specified. What was there to panic about? All the allies had to do was stop the airstrikes and take the Iraqis prisoner.

Reason No. 3 is political expedience: "Panicked or not, the White House and Powell were increasingly concerned by the potential impact of the slaughter along Highway 6 on public opinion" (p. 18). Again it is Powell *and the White House* who are blamed, but Powell is taking the brunt of NW's assault. He was playing politics when he should have been winning a war. This is particularly absurd considering that the military censors had complete control of press coverage, so the public need not have seen much to form an opinion about. What was the "impact" of the bombing of Baghdad, which went on for over a month?

None of this is obvious on first reading, neither the contradictions nor the absurdity of blaming Powell and (to a much lesser extent) Schwarzkopf for the failures of George Bush. You have to read it at least twice – and what reader does that? This is how magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* operate, like Madison Avenue propagandists. How would it look to say clearly that our top soldiers are incompetent, panicky and more concerned with politics than winning wars? No one would believe it, because it is obviously untrue. How would it look to say that even if it were true, their boss, the president, is the one who bears the responsibility for them?

And how would it look to say that Bush is incompetent, panicky and more concerned with politics than winning a war? A war he started, one should add, against

the advice of top-level civilian and military experts (including Powell), against the will of almost half the Congress, against the will of more than half of the population, against the War Powers Act, against the Constitution, and against common sense?

The subtlety of such whitewashing should be appreciated. It goes far beyond partisanship. This is very sophisticated propaganda. If you only have to read once to get the message, twice to understand it, and three times to realize that it's a lie, you're dealing with experts.

6. The Herman-Chomsky conspiracy

In presenting their "propaganda model" of the mainstream press, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (*Manufacturing Consent*, NY: Pantheon, 1989) say as clearly as anyone could that it is *not* a conspiracy theory. For them, the mainstream press is not conspiratorial, but conformist:

> Institutional critiques such as we present in this book are commonly dismissed by establishment commentators as "conspiracy theories," but this is just an evasion. We do not use any kind of "conspiracy" hypothesis to explain mass-media performance. In fact, our treatment is much closer to a "free market" analysis, with the results largely an outcome of the workings of market forces. Most biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organization, market, and political power. Censorship is largely self-censorship, by reporters and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and media organizational requirements and by people at higher levels within media organizations who are chosen to implement, and have usually internalized, the constraints imposed by proprietary and other market and governmental centers of power (xii, my emphasis).

As if determined to prove the accuracy of the authors' prediction, Nicholas Lemann responds in the *New Republic* (Jan. 1/16, 1989):

> This sounds reassuring, but it's misleading: *Manufacturing Consent* really is a conspiracy theory.

Lemann doesn't bother to say what he thinks Chomsky and Herman's conspiracy theory might be, but hopes we will infer that they share the communist fear of a capitalist conspiracy. It takes several Orwellian flips to follow this. Lemann does not even try to be rational. He is evasive, exactly as Chomsky and Herman predict.

"Evasion" is a polite way to describe this tactic. Deliberate misrepresentation is more accurate. For example, when Herman and Chomsky say that the press fairly openly serves the interests of *government and corporate centers of power*, Lemann reports them as saying "the press fairly openly serves the interests of its *capitalist masters*." When they give examples of the press printing falsehoods and suppressing inconvenient truths, the better to maintain the *government propaganda* line, Lemann transforms this into "the better to maintain the *party* line."

Thus we have Chomsky and Herman transformed by innuendo into communists, who use terminology referring to capitalists which is in fact the terminology that

capitalists use to refer to communists. It is we capitalists who refer to the *communist masters* and their *party line*. Here is our old friend, the Red Peril, the International Communist Conspiracy, represented by the dastardly Chomsky and Herman, in reverse. *Manufacturing Consent*, we are to understand, is a theory of the International Capitalist Conspiracy.

Lemann cannot spell this out, of course, because clarifying the innuendoes would require him to describe this chimera he has invented: the International Capitalist Conspiracy Theory. It would then become clear that this is not what Chomsky and Herman are advocating, that they are in fact saying exactly what they say they are saying. Instead, Lemann raises the specter of Chomsky and Herman as both communist conspirators and conspiracy theorists (of the capitalist conspiracy).

This is a subtle, if confusing, job of demonization. There is no subtlety at all, however, in dismissing everything the authors say without any argumentation whatsoever. For example, Lemann summarizes two chapters of the book (105 pages, 229 footnotes) as follows:

> When Nicaragua abrogates civil liberties, it's big news, but the much more serious abuses in Guatemala and El Salvador get much less attention here [i.e. in the U.S.]. Genocide in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge [from April 1975 through 1978] is covered more than genocide in Cambodia by the United States and its allies [bombing from 1969 through April 1975]. Guess why?

The summary is correct, and there is no attempt to refute Herman and Chomsky's argument. Instead we have a sardonic "Guess why?" at the end, which might as well be "So what?" What are we supposed to guess? The substance of what Herman and Chomsky are saying – that 1) the US government is guilty of genocide, and 2) the press is guilty of failing to report it adequately – elicit neither confirmation nor denial from Lemann. This is what Chomsky and Herman mean by an evasive tactic.

If evasion becomes tiresome, one can simply lie. You just change what people actually say into what you would like them to have said. If they say they don't have a conspiracy theory, you say they do. If they advocate more *public* control of the press, you say they want "more *state* control." If they say that a *democratic* political order requires *public* access to the media, you say they want "a press controlled by a *left-wing* political order." Obviously, Lemann is counting on no one reading the book. Here is what Chomsky and Herman actually say:

> Grass-roots and public-interest organizations need to recognize and try to avail themselves of these media (and organizational) opportunities [cable and satellite communications]. Local nonprofit radio and television stations also provide an opportunity for direct media access that has been underutilized in the United States...*Public* radio and television, despite having suffered serious damage during the Reagan years, also represent an alternative media channel whose resuscitation and improvement should be of serious concern to those interested in contesting the propaganda system. The steady commercialization of the *publicly* owned air waves should be vigorously opposed. In the long run, a *democratic political order* requires far wider control of and access to the media. Serious discussion of how this can be done, and the incorporation of fundamental media reform into political programs, should be high on progressive agendas.

Here is Lemann's comment::

> This assumes that the *political order that controls the press* won't be a conservative one, which is a stretch, but there are certainly plenty of examples around the world of a press *controlled by a left-wing political order*...But the temptation to view the mainstream press as a potential locus for liberalism outside the electoral system should be stoutly resisted. Not only is the prospect of a *politicized press* a little frightening, because the press is so powerful, and so much less accountable than government; it's also probably unattainable. For a variety of reasons, the mainstream press almost always responds to, rather than creates, the political mood.

It is hard to believe that a speaker of the English language, much less the national correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*, is capable of such gross misunderstanding. If Lemann had been paid by the CIA to write this piece, he could not have done a better job of disinformation.

7. The Soviet "Coup of Errors"

There were a number of strange things about the attempted Soviet coup of August 1991, some of which were discussed in mainstream press organs like *Newsweek*, but other questions remain unasked, much less answered.

One question is why Gorbachev didn't see it coming. As *Newsweek* says, "For nearly a year conservative hard-liners had all but flaunted their mutinous designs" (9/2/91:22). Gorbachev must have been "blind, arrogant, or just played out" not to have foreseen what would happen.

Another possibility, mentioned in the Soviet press, is that Gorbachev was in on it:

> *Commersant* [a Moscow business weekly] published an investigative article asking why the plotters had left Gorbachev with his own well-armed security guards. ... Other mysteries remained. Why did Gorbachev have access to his video camera, with which he was able to tape a clandestine message to the outside world? (9/9/91:14).

A good question. The videotape conveniently documents Gorbachev's having been opposed to the coup and his refusal to cooperate with the plotters. Was he moved to do this before or after he heard the news of the resistance on the radio? And how did his people manage to get hold of the radios and manage to keep them? NW's explanation is lame: "Despite some Soviets' suspicions, the lapses seemed to be just another series of scenes in the Coup of Errors" (9/9/91:14).

Other incredibly amateurish scenes in this "coup of errors" included the following (9/2/91):

1. The plotters "missed" arresting Yeltsin at home by 40 minutes (p. 25).

2. They failed to disconnect the telephones, so that Yeltsin was able to talk with people all over the country and the world, including President Bush (p. 26). "All international telephone calls to Moscow are patched through one switch, but the junta didn't have

it cut" (p. 27).

3. They allowed reporters to roam "through the Russian parliament building with cellular phones, letting millions of Soviet citizens know that it was not too late to resist" (p. 27).

4. They "left the power on at key resistance points," allowing the continued use of faxes and photocopiers to spread news of the resistance (p. 27).

5. They failed to stop cable traffic. They "ordered gunmen to the front door of the Telegraph Office, but forgot to order the director not to send out cables" (p. 27).

6. They failed to stop radio and television transmission. They didn't disable the transmitter in the Russian parliament where Yeltsin's broadcasts were picked up by Western stations and relayed throughout the Soviet Union (p. 26) and "allowed CNN to broadcast while other international correspondents reported freely throughout the crisis" (p. 27). "Soviets denounced the coup live on Western networks, but its leaders never shut down Moscow's main satellite relay station or jammed radio broadcasts" (p. 27).

NW suggests that the reason for these failures is that the plotters were "at least 30 years behind the times" or "may have thought that leaving communications open demonstrated moderation." If this is true, if this is the KGB that the CIA has been fighting with its time and our tax money for almost half a century, it's been a total waste. Dan Quayle could have handled the problem more competently.

NW asked acting CIA Director Richard Kerr to comment. Kerr said, "This doesn't look like a professional coup. Something's wrong here" (9/2/91:27). This is an interesting statement. Too bad NW wasn't curious enough to ask him what he meant by it. That the KGB are amateurs? Surely not. That was something funny going on? That it was not what it appeared to be? That it was a hoax – an intentional failure? Perhaps.

We note that NW is not averse to conspiracy theorizing, much as they deride the practice in others, as long as the suspected conspirators are on the other side. NW notes that the "rank and file" of the Alpha Group, the special KGB commando squad that was supposed to storm the Russian White House, "unanimously decided to disobey," which could mean that "a split between the KGB's older leaders and its younger officers may have crippled the coup." This led Mikhail Golovatov, who took over the command of Alpha Group after the coup failed, to say their "refusal to obey has saved the country from civil war." NW comments: "Maybe, maybe not. Disinformation, after all, is the mother's milk of the KGB."

There is no follow-up to this comment, and it's easy to miss, buried in the middle of the article, but it contains a full-blown conspiracy theory. If the idea of the young KGB officers disobeying orders to finish the coup is "disinformation," NW is telling us that they must have been following orders from somebody else, and that this somebody else wanted the coup to fail. Who could this somebody else be? The "new guard" of the KGB? If so, what is the difference between them and the CIA? No one

is served better by the failure of the coup and the demise of the "old guard" KGB than the CIA.

We are thus given the impression of a completely new KGB, who are not only Russian heroes but international heroes, now working in harmony with the CIA, Mossad and all the other heroic Western intelligence agencies. Vadim Bakatin, the post-coup head of the KGB, apparently told NW that the KGB "should now restrict its role to being a foreign intelligence agency – something like the CIA" (9/2/91:18). This is indirect speech, so it is not clear whether the last part of the sentence comes from Bakatin or NW, but both know perfectly well that neither the CIA nor the KGB has ever restricted itself to "foreign intelligence," i.e. information-gathering. NW knows the KGB's "legion of spies, snoops and thugs" have their counterparts in the CIA, but it prefers to accommodate the "voice in the wilderness" image of the CIA – as information specialists trying to see the world as it really is.

The image of the CIA as a "rogue elephant" (the late Senator Frank Church's coinage) is not entirely accurate either. A better metaphor for the Beast of Langley would be the fox. Better yet: Jekyll and Hyde. Dr. Jekyll (Intelligence) gathers information and gives advice, while Mr. Hyde (Operations) does secretly what is often exactly the opposite of what Jekyll says openly or officially. In order to maintain a secret police – and secret government – within the mythological framework of an open, democratic society, anti-democratic institutions such as the CIA must be schizophrenic. In an authoritarian society such as the former Soviet Union, things are less complicated. Everybody knows about and fears the secret police, which, of course, is part of the government. The people have a clearly adversarial relationship with it and with the government as a whole. In our society, though we have comparably secret and unscrupulous forces ensconced within the structures of government, it is essential to maintain the illusion that we do not. Hence NW's disingenuous naivety, aimed at protecting this illusion.

For example, NW says the CIA (as Dr. Jekyll) told everybody that the coup was going to happen, in plenty of time. "But until tanks rolled in the streets of Moscow, the White House and the State Department insisted that Gorbachev could weather any challenge" (9/2/91:29). How extraordinary that Bush, an ex-director of the CIA, should ignore his own intelligence. Why did he? And why does NW fail to ask this question? When the tanks did roll into Moscow, at 6 a.m. Moscow time on Monday, August 19, Yanayev announced the state of emergency. Here is another puzzle. NW says that Brent Scowcroft awakened Bush with this news at 11:45 p.m. EST (August 18) after hearing it on CNN. If this is how well the president and his National Security Advisor are informed, the nation's security is in bad shape. 11:45 p.m. EST (Aug. 18) would be 7:45 a.m. Moscow time (Aug. 19), which means the first the president heard of what was going on was an hour and a half after it was announced to the world! This is not credible. Furthermore, U.S. spy satellites, which can read the license plates on Soviet cars, would have had no difficulty spotting the tanks moving toward Moscow long before they actually arrived and Yanayev made his announcement. Yet we are asked to believe that neither Bush nor Scowcroft knew anything until Scowcroft saw it on TV.

This picture of Bush and Scowcroft being surprised in their pyjamas (then going back to bed) an hour and a half after the coup was announced further strains

credibility when both of them assure us that at no time during the three-day coup was there any danger regarding Soviet nuclear weapons. The government and the nuclear trigger fingers of the second most powerful nation in the world, America's greatest enemy for the past 45 years, change hands, not once, but twice, in three days, and Bush says "There was no reason to be concerned" ((9/2/91:41), with similar assurances from Scowcroft and Powell. Even NW questions this, saying the coup leaders certainly could have launched nuclear weapons or credibly threatened to do so during the three days they were in power (9/2/91:41). This is only common sense. But the question NW does not ask, and the more interesting one, is: How did Bush & Co. *know* there was "no reason to be concerned"?

On the one hand, Bush was supposedly taken completely by surprise by the coup, having ignored his own intelligence. On the other hand, despite this great surprise, US intelligence was presumably good enough, and credible enough, to reassure the president, so he could reassure the public, that there was never any danger of a nuclear crisis. This is a jarring contradiction. How could the CIA know what was going on in the minds of the coup leaders? How could they have known that there was nothing to worry about? The entire Cold War was built on a foundation of infinite mistrust, and now, with the Soviet Union suddenly back in the hands of the old guard, there is no call for alarm? Again, NW does not ask.

If NW can suspect that the coup was a KGB hoax, we are certainly entitled to wonder if it was a hoax engineered by the CIA in conjunction with rebel elements in the KGB. The objective would be transparent – exactly what has happened. The communist party, the KGB, and the Soviet Union itself are destroyed. If anything could have convinced Western corporations that this huge new market is now safe for investment, this was it. A month before the coup, the US, Britain and Japan "vetoed an appeal by Gorbachev for $20 billion to $30 billion in new Western capital, saying the money would go to waste unless the Soviets carry out market reforms first" (9/2/91:38). The abortive coup broke the dam, and now the bucks are flowing.

8. *Newsweek* serves "October Surprise"

We have seen how with some finesse it is possible to turn theories and observations which are not conspiracy theories into conspiracy theories, for the purpose of discrediting them or evading substantive argument. Now let us consider what happens when a journal like *Newsweek* is confronted with a theory that really is a conspiracy theory.

Newsweek's cover story on Nov. 11, 1991, was entitled "Making of a Myth: How Reagan and Bush Came to Be Falsely Accused of Treason in the Iran Hostage Release." The alleged treason involved a deal between the 1980 Reagan campaign and the Iranian government not to release the American hostages until after the US election, thus avoiding an "October Surprise," that is, an earlier release which incumbent president Jimmy Carter could take credit for. This has been "a mother lode for conspiracy junkies for the past decade," NW says.

We note first that NW has substituted "junkies" for the usual word, "buffs," to imply that conspiracy theorists are not only eccentric hobbyists but addicts, thus perhaps criminals themselves. Either as "buffs" or "addicts," they cannot be serious

researchers. In this case, the "junkies include Gary Sick, a former top-level presidential adviser (under Carter), Barbara Honegger, who worked as a research and policy analyst for the Reagan-Bush campaign and later in the White House Office of Policy Development, the former hostages who called for a congressional investigation, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was to conduct the investigation, and all other Americans who are interested in the truth about what NW, in its wisdom, knows is a "myth."

NW claims to have "found that the key claims of the purported eyewitnesses do not hold up. What the evidence does show is the murky history of a conspiracy theory run wild." In fact, NW's investigation is nothing more than a superficial review of evidence which others, particularly Barbara Honegger and Gary Sick, have collected. Strangely, although NW mentions that Sick's book was due to be published that very week, the editors were in such a hurry to get this article out that they didn't wait to read it. This is a crude but unfortunately effective way to avoid dealing with the evidence presented by the most credible witness in the case.

"The October Surprise theory has been kicking around for the past 11 years..." NW tells us (p. 18). In other words, it's Old News. This is a standard ploy, the implication being that if there were a grain of truth in the story it would have been exposed long ago. Thus an issue like this one is largely ignored by the mainstream press for 11 years, and then dismissed when it can no longer be ignored, on the grounds that if it was ignored for so long in the first place it cannot possibly have any substance – a classic example of circular reasoning.

Just as conspiracy theorists are depicted as silly eccentrics ("buffs") or dangerous sickies ("addicts"), the theory itself, if one is forced to take it seriously, is something to be combated. It is not the alleged conspiracy that is unhealthy and dangerous, but the *theory* of the conspiracy. NW presents the background of the October Surprise story as if it were the epidemiology of a virus.

The virus begins to "run wild" in 1990 when it finds an "outlet" in "right-wing political extremist Lyndon LaRouche" (p. 19-20). LaRouche has been adopted by the Establishment press as the prototypical Dangerous Nut whose very name discredits any idea it is associated with. This is the purpose it serves here. The reader is not informed that LaRouche, nutty or not, got on the presidential ballot in twenty states in 1988, was arrested three weeks before the election, and then was tried, convicted and sentenced in the record time of four months to an inordinately harsh 15 years in prison. His followers are not the only ones who say he was railroaded and consider him a political prisoner. Former attorney general Ramsey Clark, for example, agrees.

Given its depraved source (the LaRouche publication *Executive Intelligence Review* in December 1980), the idea that "pro-Reagan British intelligence circles and the Kissinger faction" had succeeded in October 1980 in torpedoing President Carter's last-minute attempts to make a deal with Teheran (p. 20) merits no comment from NW. This is putting it rather mildly, though, compared to the current accusations, whereby the Reagan people not only foiled Carter's deal but made one of their own. NW does mention, parenthetically, that Kissinger denied the EIR report, which is presumably why the mainstream press continued to ignore the matter for another seven years. If Kissinger said it didn't happen, it didn't happen. If this is NW's attitude, they qualify as "right-wing political extremists" themselves, one would think.

The story "got its next boost" – since any such folderol could not possibly get around on its own merit – and "finally made it into the mainstream" in 1987 via the *Miami Herald* and the *New York Times*. This time the folderol came from former Iranian president Bani Sadr, who had become convinced that the Iranians in charge of hostage policy (Rafsanjani, Beheshti and Khomeini's son) had indeed made a deal with Reagan's people in October 1980 to delay the release of the hostages until after the election.
The next paragraph is worth considering closely:

> The timing [of the *New York Times* article, August 1987] was propitious – high summer, so to speak, for conspiracy buffs. The reason was the Iran-contra scandal, which proved that the Reagan administration had indeed engaged in secret dealings with Iran. Although the exact starting point of those secret negotiations remains obscure to this day, it seems clear that the roots of Iran-contra run deeper than anyone has been able to document publicly. The Reagan White House, it seems clear, was obsessed by Iran during the early 1980s. Iran-contra also showed that the administration was eager to engage in covert action, and that it was ready to lie, destroy documents and cover up a range of covert activities that violated the law (p. 20).

The first sentence contains three underlying propositions. We are not aware of them unless we take the time to analyze the language carefully, but that is the point: they are subliminal messages. To repeat the themes I've already discussed:

1. People who pursue the truth in this matter are eccentric hobbyists ("buffs").

2. This conspiracy theory is not good for us. Continuing the epidemiological metaphor introduced earlier, the story broke out under "propitious" circumstances, like a virus, in "high summer." August 1987 was a happy time for the evil conspiracy buffs, but dangerous for us because it followed immediately upon the Iran-contra scandal: we were ripe for infection by further unhealthy thoughts.

A third point puts an interesting twist on the already established notion of conspiracy theorists as buffs and addicts:

3. The conspiracy buffs are themselves the true conspirators. "Timing" requires an agent, someone who does the timing. Therefore, the re-emergence of the October Surprise story was purposeful. Who was behind it and why? The *New York Times*? Bani Sadr? We are not told. But clearly there has been a conspiracy against us, the public – namely, a conspiracy to infect us with yet another noisome conspiracy theory. Who can be behind this conspiracy but the conspiracy buffs, our real enemy?

In the rest of the paragraph, NW says Reagan's people were indeed guilty as charged in the Iran-contra affair. This is supposed to explain why the October Surprise story broke out in August 1987. But it also contradicts the propositions underlying the first sentence. If Reagan et al. were guilty in Iran-contra, NW should take more seriously the October Surprise charges. We do not notice this contradiction because NW has

long delivered its foregone conclusion that the October Surprise story is a "myth."

The paragraph, then, contains two messages – one subliminal, one straightforward. The subliminal one is comprised by the underlying propositions in the first sentence, the other by the rest of the paragraph. Consider how these two messages would appear if the first were stated as clearly as the second:

> The October Surprise story is dangerous nonsense. The Iran-contra story is absolutely true.

Now we feel compelled to insert a "but" between the sentences and ask Why? The fact is that we have not been given a shred of evidence up to this point in the article to support the first sentence, though we have been told in a number of different ways that it is so. This is brainwashing, not argumentation. It is effective for the same reasons that advertising is effective, and the proof of its effectiveness is that when we read the NW text, we do *not* ask Why? NW has conditioned us to accept its foregone conclusion. Remove the packaging and what it is trying to sell us appears in a very different light.

By the time NW gets around to the facts, they appear almost superfluous. NW contends that 1) Casey did not go to Madrid in July 1980, and 2) the Paris meeting in October did not occur.

The obvious question with respect to 1) is, even if Casey didn't go to Madrid, did he go to Paris? NW admits that "the second meeting [i.e. in Paris] involved either Casey and Gregg – or Casey, Bush and Gates – on the American side" (p. 23), but proceeds to discuss only the question of whether Casey was in Madrid. According to Barbara Honegger, "Mr. Casey is far more likely to have made the rendezvous in Paris than Mr. Bush" (*October Surprise*, New York: Tudor, 1989, p. 104), but NW doesn't even consider this possibility.

Every bit of NW's "solid evidence" concerning Bush's whereabouts on the dates in question is in Honegger's book, which has been systematically squelched ever since it appeared. NW continues that campaign here. First Honegger is described as a "would-be Deep Throat" alongside CIA operative Richard Brenneke, Mossad operative Ari Ben-Menashe, and Jamshid Hashemi, the brother of Iranian arms dealer Cyrus Hashemi. Then her assiduously researched argument, based on the testimony of many witnesses, is reduced to a remark by a Reagan campaign staffer she overheard in October 1980, as if this were all she had to say. Ignoring the real evidence, NW chides Honegger for not being "able to identify this alleged staffer or say whether she had any reason to believe the staffer knew what he was talking about" (p. 21). The second problem with Honegger, according to NW, was that she

> seemed to have some difficulty in separating fact from fiction. Even Christopher Hitchens, a columnist for *The Nation* magazine and a sometime proponent of the October Surprise theory, said her exposé was "diffuse and naive" (p. 21).

NW offers nothing to support this accusation, nothing to explain Hitchens' remark. One suspects that Hitchens is quoted here in an attempt to associate Honegger with what NW would consider left-wing "extremists," despite the fact that conspiracy theories are more widespread on the right than on the left, and despite the fact that

Honegger, as a former Reagan adviser, is hardly left-wing.

Just as NW ignores the question of whether Casey went to Paris, it also ignores what Honegger considers the more likely scenario: Bush may have flown to New York the night of the 18th to meet secretly with Iran's prime minister Rajai, a member of the hostage policy committee, just before Rajai left for Algiers the same night. Curiously, although NW claims that "George Bush did not go to Paris on Oct. 19-20," the night of the 18th is omitted from the discussion, though it is a crucial part of the time period in question (from about 10:00 p.m. on Oct. 18 to between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. on Oct. 19.) NW relies exclusively on the Secret Service logs, which Honegger shows to be unreliable and contradictory. NW says: "Those logs show that Bush campaigned in New Jersey and Pennsylvania on Oct. 17, and that he went to the Chevy Chase Country club, outside Washington, during the day on Oct. 19." What happened to the 18th?

Honegger points out that no one, including the Secret Service, can personally vouch for Bush's whereabouts from the night of the 18th to late the next day. Unlike Honegger, NW has no curiosity about why Stephen Hart, Bush's campaign spokesman, said Bush flew from Philadelphia to Andrews Air Force Base, while Secret Service records (completed 12 days later) show that he flew to Washington National airport. Why does the Secret Service have him arriving at Washington National at 9:25 p.m. when the manager of the motel where Bush was staying in Chester, Pennsylvania, said he didn't check out until 11:00 p.m. the same evening?

NW further ignores Honegger's revelation that one of the two Secret Service documents purporting to show Bush in Chevy Chase on the 19th was filled out a week afterwards, apparently by one of Bush's campaign staffers. This document states that "security" was "not applicable," meaning that probably no Secret Service personnel were around Bush on the 19th. Honegger describes the other document as "heavily censored." The secretary of the Board of Governors of the club does not remember either Bush or any Secret Service personnel being at the club that day and has no written records. Bush was not a member of the club then (though his wife was), and if he was there for his usual Sunday tennis game, he is more dedicated than most: the weather was rainy, cool, and overcast. Who was his tennis partner?

We read in Honegger, but not in NW, that even if Bush was at the country club between 10:29 and 11:56 a.m. on Oct. 19, as the Secret Service logs show, he could have left Paris shortly after noon and still have been back in Washington by that time, given the six-hour time difference, if he used a military jet, which can make the trip in three hours. Leaving Paris at 11:00 a.m. Paris time would have put him in Washington at 8:00 a.m. on the same day. This would have been time enough to get to Chevy Chase by 10:30 (if he was there), and to the Capital Hilton in Washington by that evening, where he was definitely seen, although the Secret Service records give his arrival time variously as 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. There would certainly have been enough time to fly to New York instead of to Paris, which Honegger thinks is more likely.

NW speaks of "two broad-brush assumptions" of the October Surprise theory. One is that "there is oddly little evidence of any substantial weapons 'payoff' to Iran" (p. 24). What is odd about this? Where would NW expect to find such evidence – in the Secret Service logs?

The second "pivotal notion" is that the Carter/Iran hostage negotiations broke

down in October, which October Surprise theorists attribute to the machinations of the Reagan-Bush campaign. NW's explanation for this is that Iran was "distracted" by the war with Iraq. Nevertheless, NW says, Rafsanjani did "try to resolve the hostage impasse while Carter was still in power." This is contradictory, but the point is supposed to be that Rafsanjani could not have been part of the October Surprise deal as some (like Bani Sadr) claim, because he supposedly tried to resolve the problem with Carter. This may convince NW, but it should be obvious that Rafsanjani could not have tried very hard, since the issue was not resolved until Carter was out of the picture, which is precisely the point of the October Surprise theory.

NW says that many Iranians were hostile to Carter and didn't want him re-elected. This is supposed to mean that Carter's negotiations would have fallen through anyway, whether Reagan's crew intervened or not. But it also means that the Iranians would have loved to make a deal with Carter's opponents – which, again, is precisely the point of the October Surprise theory.

According to NW, "the whole notion of the October Surprise" may stem from Khomeini's nephew confusing Carter's men with Reagan's. This is ludicrous. Even if it were true, what difference would it make? It would still have been Reagan's men who made the treasonous deal, whoever Khomeini's nephew *thought* they were.

NW ends by comparing this case with the JFK assassination:

> These details may or may not convince conspiracy theorists who cling to the October Surprise – just as the Warren Commission report failed to convince a whole generation of would-be investigators that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed John F. Kennedy (p. 23).

This offers some encouragement. It means that the majority of Americans, who have always believed that the assassination was a conspiracy, are not as naive – or perfidious – as the would-be investigators at NW, who prefer to cling to the Magic Bullet theory and George Bush's coattails rather than find out and tell the truth.

9. Pearl Harbor Surprise

Two weeks after its October Surprise cover(up) story, NW offers an interesting contrast in its Pearl Harbor anniversary story. Here another conspiracy theory, equally if not more speculative, is treated very differently. This is the "notion that Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, or the two in concert dragged America into war by suppressing warnings of the attack [on Pearl Harbor]" – which "must be rated among the great American conspiracy theories" (11/25/91:28).

In this case, NW allows a good deal of the evidence to speak for itself. The argument that the British had cracked Japan's military code before Dec. 7 is "convincing," and evidence that warnings were suppressed go unchallenged:

> A British double agent acquired Japanese battle plans describing an attack on Pearl Harbor. U.S. experts decoded a Japanese message ordering that individual ship positions in Pearl Harbor be plotted. A Dutch diplomat warned Washington specifically about an impending attack on the base. Finally, U.S. military officials picked up a coded radio broadcast to Japanese worldwide before the attack: *Higashi*

no kazeame (East Wind Rain). It was the "Go" code. Why wasn't it relayed to Hawaii? (p. 28).

An hour and a half before the attack an enemy submarine was spotted and sunk by the U.S. Navy one mile off Pearl Harbor, and a half-hour later a huge radar blip which "had to be a huge flight of planes 137 miles to the north" was reported. No action was taken on either warning (p. 27).

NW even offers a credible analysis of the longer-term effects of the attack:

The shock was galvanic. It forged a superpower. Isolationist and interventionist impulses that had always divided the nation converged in white-hot fury and a war for unconditional surrender. And the after-shock generated a fear of a nuclear sneak attack that shaped American defense theories and budgets right through the cold war (p. 25).

Another "legacy was an obsession with better intelligence that led to the birth of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency" (p. 30).

These are astonishing admissions. It is as if NW is going out of its way to be fair to the Pearl Harbor conspiracy theorists in order to give credibility to its (totally unconvincing) attack on the October Surprise theorists in the previous issue.

Nevertheless, here too the standard conspiracy-bashing premises are clearly discernible on the level of metaphor and innuendo:

1. Conspiracy theorists are "buffs" looking for a gimmick that "sells books" (p. 28).

2. Conspiracy theories are Old News (and therefore insignificant): "Half a century after Pearl Harbor, the question still resonates...by its sheer staying power (p. 28).

3. Conspiracy theories are wild and dangerous. (This contradicts 1. and 2, but we are dealing here with doublethink, not logic.) The Pearl Harbor story is a fire that "sprang to life," was "fed" and then "rekindled" (p. 28).

4. Conspiracy theorists are the true conspirators: "Assemble the evidence one way, and a conspiracy "seems all too plausible" (p. 28). Someone is trying to trick us, to harm us. The arson metaphor has the same implication: the flames of conspiracy theory "were rekindled by recent revelations." The arsonists are not specifically identified, but since the crime has been redefined, by metaphor, as the *theory* of the crime, the culprits must be the theorists. (Like 3, this contradicts 1 and 2.)

Despite these more or less subliminal (and internally contradictory) messages, on the whole NW is telling us that the Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory may well be true. This would mean that FDR sacrificed 2,330 Americans in order to catapult the country into war – a far greater crime, one would think, than keeping 52 Americans imprisoned three months longer than necessary.

Why such different treatment of these two conspiracy theories? It only makes sense if we realize that NW, like the rest of the mass media, is primarily concerned not with truth but with effect. Time digs the memory hole deep. Pearl Harbor is half a century away and FDR is long gone. Even if a tiny fraction of NW readers began

to believe that FDR wilfully sacrificed 2,330 Americans, what effect would it have? Who would sound the call for revolution? Who would be thrown out of office?

We can also read in NW that "Hoover's FBI was an American gestapo" (9/30/91:49). Who bats an eye? Hoover, and the presidents who tolerated him, are also long gone. Even Reagan has been gone long enough that his policies in Nicaragua can now be described as "bellicose" (10/21/91:23). That's all Old News.

But Bush was still the incumbent president when this article was written. Could we imagine NW calling his policies in Panama or the Gulf "bellicose"? Can we imagine NW referring to the FBI or the CIA today as anything remotely resembling a "gestapo"? There is no evidence that the purposes and methods of these agencies have changed significantly since Hoover's time, but would NW dare to suggest that an ex-chief of the American gestapo (CIA) was sitting in the oval office? Of course not. All this will appear in *Time* and *Newsweek* at the proper time – when it is too late to matter.

CHAPTER FOUR
Was There an AIDS Contract?

I heard about Jakob Segal's theory that the AIDS virus originated in a US government biological warfare research laboratory in early 1989. After some preliminary research, I was amazed to find that this shocking theory had received no attention whatsoever in the mainstream American press, and almost none in Europe.

The questions this theory raised were a matter of pure science, or so it seemed to me. There were only three possibilities: 1) Segal was wrong; 2) he was right; 3) it could not be determined either way. I resolved to find out which of these was true.

1. Informing the press

My first thought was to notify the press. Perhaps, by some fluke, they had not heard of Segal, just as I hadn't, though he had been publishing his conclusions since 1986. Surely American journalists would be as anxious as I was to find out and expose the truth. If Segal was wrong, it would be one's patriotic duty to say so. If he was right, or even *might* be right, the same principle would hold. In the land of the free and the home of the brave, one does not shirk from the truth. Remember Watergate! So I wrote the following article and sent it off in September 1989 to a couple of dozen US journals and newspapers:

Is AIDS Man-Made?

The theory that AIDS originated in the laboratory has been circulating in Europe, particularly in West Germany, since late 1986.

The theory hinges on the claim that the AIDS virus (HIV) is virtually identical to two other viruses: Visna, which causes a fatal disease in sheep but does not infect humans, and HTLV-I (Human T-Cell Leukemia Virus), which infects humans but is seldom fatal.

Prof. Jakob Segal, the author of the theory, says that structural analysis using genome mapping proves that HIV is more similar to Visna than to any other retrovirus. The portion (about three percent) of the HIV genome which does not correspond structurally to Visna corresponds exactly to part of the HTLV-I genome.

This similarity, says Segal, cannot be explained by a natural process of evolution and mutation. It can only have resulted from an artificial combination of the two viruses.

He notes that the symptoms of AIDS are consistent with the complementary effects of two different viruses. AIDS patients who do not die of the consequences of immune deficiency show the same damage to the brain, lungs, intestines, and kidneys that occurs in sheep affected with Visna. Combining Visna with HTLV-I would allow the virus to enter not only the macrophages of the inner organs but also the T4 lymphocytes and thus cause immune deficiency, which is exactly what AIDS does.

As further evidence that HIV is a construct of Visna and HTLV-I, Segal cites studies which show that the reverse transcription process in HIV has two discrete

points of peak activity which correspond, respectively, to those of Visna and HTLV-I.

AIDS is thus, according to Segal, essentially a variety of Visna. This has important implications for research, since a cure or vaccine might be found sooner by studying Visna in sheep than by concentrating, as at present, on monkeys.

The theory of the African origin of AIDS, that it developed in African monkeys and was transferred to man, has been abandoned by most researchers. All of the known varieties of SIV (Simian Immunodeficiency Virus) are structurally so dissimilar to HIV (much less similar than HIV and Visna) that a common origin is out of the question. Furthermore, even if such a development by natural mutation were possible, it would not explain the sudden outbreak of AIDS in the early 1980s, since monkeys and men have been living together in Africa since the beginning of human history.

The "Africa Legend," as it is called in a 1988 West German (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) television documentary, is further debunked by the epidemiological history of AIDS. There is no solid evidence of AIDS in Africa before 1983. The earliest documented cases of AIDS date from 1979 in New York.

In addition to the WDR documentary and occasional mention in magazines like *Stern* and *Spiegel*, Segal's work has been published in West Germany (*AIDS-Erreger aus dem Gen-Labor?* [AIDS-Virus from the Gene Laboratory?], Kuno Kruse, ed., Berlin: Simon & Leutner, 1987) and India (with Lilli Segal, *The Origin of AIDS*, Trichur, India: Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, 1989). He has also been conducting lecture tours in West Germany.

Scientific journals, Segal says, have refused to publish or discuss his theory. This is difficult to understand. If he is wrong, he should certainly be refuted. The cornerstone of the theory is that HIV is a combination of Visna and HTLV-I. Segal claims that any trained laboratory technician could produce AIDS from these components, today, in less than two weeks. If this is true, it should be demonstrable by experiment.

The next question is, if it is possible to produce HIV from Visna and HTLV-I now, was it also possible in 1977, when Segal claims the AIDS virus was created? He says it was, by use of the less precise "shotgun" method of gene manipulation available then, though it would have taken longer – about six months. If this is true, it should also be demonstrable.

The final question would be: *Was* it produced in a laboratory? Segal believes he has shown that it was, but he goes further than that. He also believes he knows who produced it and why. Segal quotes from a document presented by a Pentagon official named Donald MacArthur on June 9, 1969, to a Congressional committee, in which $10 million is requested to develop, over the next 5 to 10 years, a new, contagious micro-organism which would destroy the human immune system.

Whether such research is categorized as "offensive" or "defensive" is immaterial: in order to defend oneself against a possible new virus, so the reasoning goes, one must first develop the virus.

Since the Visna virus was already well known, Segal continues, the problem was to find a human retrovirus that would enable it to infect humans. Scrutiny of the technical literature, Segal says, reveals that Dr. Robert Gallo isolated such a virus, HTLV-I, by 1975, though it was not given this name until later.

1975 was also the year the virus section of Fort Detrick (the US Army's center for biological warfare research in Frederick, Maryland) was renamed the Frederick Cancer Research Facilities and placed under the supervision of the National Cancer Institute, Gallo's employer.

It was there, in the P4 (high-security) laboratory at Fort Detrick, according to Segal, where the AIDS virus was actually created, between the fall of 1977 and spring of 1978.

Six months is precisely the time it would have taken, using the techniques available then, to create the AIDS virus from Visna and HTLV-I.

Segal claims that the new virus was then tested on convicts who volunteered for the experiment in return for their release from prison. Failing to show any early symptoms of disease, the prisoners were released after six months. Some were homosexual, and went to New York, where the disease was first attested in 1979.

The researchers had not counted on creating a disease with such a long incubation period. (One year is relatively short for AIDS, but would not be unusual if the infection was induced by high-dosage injections.) If the researchers had kept their human guinea pigs under observation for a longer time, they would have detected the disease and been able to contain it.

In other words, Segal claims that AIDS is the result of a germ warfare research experiment gone awry.

In an interview on April 18, 1987, published in the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant*, Dr. Gallo describes Segal's theory as KGB propaganda.

Segal, who is Russian (Lithuanian Jewish) but has been a professor of biology (now emeritus) at Humboldt University in East Berlin since 1953, is a bit old (78) to be starting a career as a propagandist. Soviet and East German officials, for their part, have maintained a discreet silence on the matter, for reasons of realpolitik, Segal believes.

The question of whether AIDS is man-made or not cannot be answered by dismissing it as propaganda.

Segal believes he has answered the question. We do not have to believe him, but we do have to believe that the following questions are answerable:

1) Can HIV be produced by combining Visna and HTLV-I in the laboratory *now*?

2) Can it be produced using the techniques available in 1977?

3) What *did* go on at Ft. Detrick between 1969 and 1978? What were the results of the $10 million Pentagon research project announced on June 9, 1969?

I didn't get a single reply – not even a form-letter rejection. Later I rewrote the article, concentrating on the MacArthur testimony and the fact that neither it nor Segal had ever been discussed in the press. This much was certain. The MacArthur testimony was authentic, and part of the public record. I had seen and photocopied it myself in the Library of Congress. On June 9, 1969, Dr. D. M. MacArthur, then Deputy Director of Research and Technology for the Dept. of Defense, told the House Subcommittee on Appropriations:

> Molecular biology is a field that is advancing very rapidly, and eminent biologists believe that within a period of 5 to 10 years it would be possible to produce a synthetic biological agent, an agent that does not naturally exist and for which no natural immunity could have been acquired...a new infective microorganism which could differ in certain important aspects from any known disease-causing organisms. Most important of these is that it might be refractory [resistant] to the immunological and therapeutic processes upon which we depend to maintain our relative freedom from infectious disease...A research program to explore the

> feasibility of this could be completed in approximately 5 years at a total cost of $10 million.

This was scandal enough. It does not mean that Segal is right, but it does mean the US government wanted, and considered it feasible, to create an AIDS-like virus as early as 1969.

It would not be surprising if the government wanted to keep this quiet, but what about the press? I could find only two references to MacArthur's testimony, in a book by Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman (*A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret Story of Chemical & Biological Warfare*, NY: Hill & Wang, 1982), and in a couple of articles by Robert Lederer and Nathaniel S. Lehrman in *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (28, summer 1987, and 29, winter 1988).

Segal had been similarly ignored. Through the Amerika Haus library in Frankfurt I ran a DIALOGUE search of the indexes of major US newspapers, magazines and journals for the name Jakob Segal, and it came up negative. At least he had been mentioned a couple of times in *Der Spiegel*. In America he was apparently completely unknown.

I found this intolerable. I did not agree with Segal; I only wanted to see his arguments discussed by people competent to make a judgement. Then I and the rest of the reading public could decide which arguments were more convincing. I thought that was the way free speech worked. Here was a guy saying the US government created AIDS, and claiming to have proved it scientifically, and he was being ignored.

By contrast, I had read about the storm of controversy that Peter Duesberg's theory had caused. He suggested in 1987 that AIDS is not caused by a virus at all – certainly at least as speculative a thesis as Segal's. But there is a significant difference. If Duesberg is right and HIV does not cause the disease, the question of whether the virus originated in the laboratory is irrelevant. In that sense, it is the antithesis of Segal's theory. Was that why it received so much attention, while Segal was completely ignored?

I also wanted to call attention to Segal's new book (*AIDS: Die Spur führt ins Pentagon*, Essen: Neuer Weg, 1990), because as far as I knew none of his work had even appeared in English.

I sent the revised version of my article out to a number of journals, but the only reply I received was from Bill Schaap of *Covert Action Quarterly*, who wrote:

> We have real problems with the Segal material....There was a logical fallacy in Lehrman's reliance [on Segal's theory], too, because he used Segal's theories to bolster his notion that the release of AIDS was deliberate, even though Segal believes that it was accidentally released....The issue is further complicated by the recent retraction of the current Soviet government of the allegations of CBW connections they had made, undoubtedly another of Bush's little quid pro quos. A further difficulty is that the most credible critic in this country of the standard medical establishment line is Dr. Peter Duesberg, who argues (and Lehrman agrees) that AIDS is caused toxically, not simply virally. The synthesis of all this might be that if AIDS is toxically triggered, even if it requires some viral precondition, the trigger could be caused either environmentally or deliberately or both.
>
> In any event, although we believe that the issue of the cause of AIDS is an

incredibly significant one (and certainly do not think you or any other the other critics of the Establishment) are lone nuts, we don't think that the issue is anything near so clear-cut that the failure to give significant coverage to Segal is "the biggest cover-up since JFK.

We would be interested in a general piece on the failure of the media (U.S. and Western Europe) to cover alternative theories in general, which would not have to accept any particular theory, but would show how conferences which take the establishment line get considerable coverage whereas those which do not are barely, if at all, covered. Ditto for the personalities involved.

Anyway, these are some of the reasons why we do not feel like running with the ball right now.

I replied:

I wanted to focus on the 1969 MacArthur testimony – a scandal in itself – and what Segal makes of that. You probably have Segal's English monograph of 1986, which he wrote before he knew about the MacArthur testimony. (He got it from Rifkin). Since then he has been much more specific about tracing what he considers to be the exact course of development of the virus, i.e. Gallo's execution of that 1969 contract.

This – Gallo's role – may not be provable, but the heart of Segal's thesis, namely that VISNA + HTLV-I = HIV-I, is testable, as I pointed out. There is no scientific explanation for why it has not been tested, which leaves the political one. The theory is very clear and precise. If Segal is wrong, he could easily be *proved* wrong.

This is not the case with Duesberg or any of the other theories. The effect of the Duesberg theory, as I pointed out in the article, is to remove the entire question of the *origin of the virus* from the debate, which then becomes dissipated in the probably unresolvable question of environmental triggers, susceptibility, etc.

The question we should ask is this: Why has Duesberg's theory, which is *not* testable, been given so much attention, while Segal's theory, which *is* testable, has been completely ignored? I did a national (US) magazine and newspaper database search (DIALOGUE), and if it is accurate, the name Jakob Segal has never appeared in a major US newspaper or any scientific journal.

If Duesberg is the most credible critic in the US of the medical establishment, as you say, he serves (willy nilly) the cover-up admirably, for the reason I have described. As we well know, mind control involves control of the offense as well as the defense (Gallo, Essex). The parallel here with the JFK case is the Blakey Mafia theory. That, as Garrison says, is a red herring. It doesn't matter who pulled the triggers, and it doesn't matter what 'triggers' AIDS, if we are trying to find out the whole truth. Blakey will have us tracking down Mafiosi for the next hundred years, and Duesberg will have us searching for non-viral AIDS 'triggers' for another hundred.

It's hard to say what the biggest cover-up up will turn out to be (if anyone ever finds out). The issue can never be as 'clear-cut' as JFK, in terms of evidence ignored, suppressed, and distorted, because there are not enough microbiologists around who are capable or willing to do the private research. In terms of lives lost and money spent, though, AIDS will be near the top. In another sense, too, this is as big as JFK, because if Segal is right it means that 'science' is just as corrupt and manipulable as the press and the government. This will come as a great shock to many who believe that questions of 'pure science' are immune to political manipulation.

You are probably right about a deal with the Russians. In fact, Segal says they talked about AIDS at Reykjavik. Maybe that's what Reagan was really upset about, rather than SDI. I wouldn't be surprised if he heard the truth about AIDS at that conference for the first time. In any case, Segal was told subsequently by East German and Soviet authorities that he could continue to publish and speak on the subject (mainly in West Germany – the East Germans gave him no opportunities), as long as he did not explicitly associate himself with the East German or Soviet governments. Now there is the question. They could have stopped him whenever they wanted to, but they didn't. Do you think they would have allowed him to continue to publish and give lectures in the West if they thought he was wrong? If he was a KGB agent, as some people have said, would they have been stupid enough to let him make such monstrous allegations if there was nothing to them, and if they could easily be proved false?

I will think about your suggestion for a more general approach, but are you sure that another consideration of alternative theories would be productive? CAIB did a good job on that. To make the analogy with JFK again, what good is rehash of the 'alternative' assassination theories? It just perpetuates the confusion and plays right into the hands of those who want to avoid, most of all, clear questions and clear answers. I tried to word my article so as not to imply acceptance of Segal's theory. I do not accept it. I think it should be discussed. My point was that Segal has posed a clear, testable hypothesis which, despite the importance of its implications, has been completely ignored. That point would be lost if other theories were included, because the others are not testable.

There was no response. I was getting nowhere.

2. Talking to the experts

My next tack was to try to pursue the science of the matter. This was difficult, since my last foray into the natural sciences was in 1968, when I took the general biology course at college which was also required for humanities majors. Still, as a linguist I felt I was a scientist of a sort, and I felt that with a reasonable effort I should at least be able to inform myself enough to answer my basic question: Was Segal right, wrong, or is it impossible to know?

In the summer of 1989 I had seen a reference in *Time* magazine to someone I had known as a teenager who had become a well-known cancer and AIDS researcher – a virologist and a viral surgeon. If anybody could answer my questions it would be Tony. (The name is fictitious; I see no reason to personalize the issue.) I found his address in *Who's Who* and wrote to him, enclosing a copy of my unpublished article and a longer article written by Segal that had been published by a left-wing (Marxist) West German newspaper. An exchange of letters followed, which I reproduce here:

Sept. 14, 1989
Dear Tony,

...My main reason for writing is to ask what you think of the enclosed. My article has not been published. Segal's article is from the *Rote Fahne*, a Marxist weekly, which I know doesn't exactly enhance its credibility, but nobody else will publish him. That shouldn't affect the science of the matter. I hope your German is up to it. I think you'll find Segal's style clear and non-convoluted, which is more than I

can say for most German academicians – or American ones, for that matter.

Let me be honest. I'm quite aware that you might be the last person who might tell me anything, even if you could, about this, but the thing really bothers me, and a lot of other people too, at least in this country. If Segal is wrong, he sure as hell ought to be proved wrong. Would be great to hear from you, in any case.
Best,
Mike Morrissey

September 21, 1989
Dear Mike,

Your question is one that has come up many times before. The answer is simple. The virus is not man-made. Segal gives us too much credit since this is the most complex virus we have seen. We can't even make a simple one. If it were as he says we would also have the technology to eliminate it and we do not, as yet.

We don't know where it actually comes from but the best guess is from a non-human primate from Africa. This is because very similar viruses cause AIDS-like diseases in these animals. However, the "missing link" has not been found, but it may turn up at any time as more studies are done.

You may also have heard that AIDS is not caused by the virus HIV. More nonsense. The evidence that it does is overwhelming and this will become clearer to the public as specific drugs and vaccines are developed. To get a better view of all of this let me refer you to the October 1988 issue of *Scientific American*.
Yours sincerely,
Antonio L. DiAngelo

Oct. 6, 1989
Dear Tony,

I'm afraid I don't understand your comments on AIDS. Of course we cannot make a horse or a donkey, but if we put them together we can "make" a mule. Segal says the horse and the donkey were Visna and HTLV-1. Nor do I see why, if this is what happened, the virus should be any more defeatable than any other.

I don't know if you have actually read Segal's work, but it is very convincing and simply cannot be dismissed out of hand. He has countered every even halfway "scientific" argument – it would appear – with success. What the public cannot understand or accept is why, if he is wrong, he cannot be refuted with scientific arguments, and why his arguments are simply ignored. If he is right, of course, everything is all too clear.

Segal deals at length with Essex's Africa hypothesis, and points out that even he (Essex) has retracted it, although it continues to be propagated in the media.

Nor can I understand why researchers seem to be ignoring the possibility that AIDS is a Visna variety and might be more amenable to prevention or cure if treated as such. That means that they should be working with sheep, not monkeys.
Sincerely,
Mike

Oct. 17, 1989
Dear Mike,

This is hard to do by letter, but here goes. Visna + HTLV-1 could never be crossed to give HIV-1. HIV-1 has things in it that neither of the others have.

HIV-1 is a member of the same family as Visna but more complex. Indeed, much of what is known about Visna is used to further our knowledge of HIV-1.

The Africa hypothesis is not that of Essex. What he has retracted is something that relates to HIV-2, an HIV of West African origin. Max detected the presence of this virus in man but when he isolated it, a contamination occurred in his lab with SIV-1 (a simian AIDS virus). This was not found out until later. The real HIV-2 exists and is a second human virus.

You need to read much more than Segal and I suppose I should read more about him. I finally stopped some time ago when I concluded he was on the wrong track. I can imagine how difficult it is for you, though, with all of this controversy about. It is a very strange time in science.

Best regards,
Antonio L. DiAngelo

Oct. 29, 1989
Dear Tony,

I know I'm in way over my head, but all I can do, like everyone else, is try to evaluate somehow or other the opinions of experts, which is very difficult when they contradict each other.

I don't know if you are referring to the tat genes when you say HIV-1 has things that Visna and HTLV-1 do not, but if so Segal responds to this objection in his book as follows:

As early as June 1986 Gonda et al. (Proceedings of the Nat. Academy of Sciences 83, 4007-4011) published a comparative study of the HIV and Visna virus genomes ... The result was that both genomes were highly similar, and that all structural elements were shared by both of them, except for a small segment of 300 nucleotide pairs with an exceptionally high genetic instability, nearly identical to a section of the HTLV-1 genome. That means that all the new structural elements first described in the HIV genome, such as the tat-genes complex, also exist in the Visna virus genome.

Segal has a whole chapter based largely on this study by Gonda and an earlier one published in *Science* 227, 173-177 (1985). The 60% homology Gonda found between Visna and HIV-1 in 1986, with the latter varying by mutation at about 10% every 2 years (Hahn et al., *Science* 232, 1548-1553, 1986), would point to near identity around early 1978, when Segal claims that a section of a genome originating from HTLV-1 was added to Visna by gene surgery to produce HIV-1.

In another chapter, Segal suggests that HIV-2 is a manipulated SIV virus, made pathogenic possibly by the surgical insertion of an orf-A gene.

Other microbiologists I have talked to do not dispute Segal's thesis that AIDS is a laboratory product, though there is disagreement as to exactly how it might have happened and from precisely what components. I have also been referred to an article by Julie Overbaugh et al. in *Nature* 332, 731-734 (1988), which apparently demonstrates that it is possible to produce a new virus in the laboratory which is more pathogenic than its components. This means that Segal's scenario is at least not to be ruled out by any fundamental law of nature.

Certainly Dr. MacArthur did not believe this in 1969, when he made the statement to Congress that Segal quotes in the article I sent you. Jeremy Rifkin's petition of Feb. 10, 1988 (appended to Segal's book) to disclose what became of this project yielded nothing, of course. It's a secret! Perhaps the scientists themselves are our best hope. Segal feels that Gonda may have tried indirectly to point to the truth by calling attention to the similarity between Visna and HIV – if so, more power to him.

The worst thing about Segal's theory is not that it may be correct, bad as that

would be, but that it is being, as the Germans say, "tot geschwiegen." Of that there can be no doubt, and the implications are dismal.
Sincerely,
Mike

Nov. 20, 1989
Dear Mike,

I can sympathize with your confusion and let me state that it is Segal that is over his head. He doesn't understand the words homology or mutation rates. He creates new viruses by splicing in genes (which is possible) without understanding the outcome. It is all nonsense.

Surely we can switch genes between HIV and HTLV-1 and make them work. It could also be done between Visna and HTLV-1, in theory. But, I repeat, Visna plus HTLV-1 in any arrangement does not make HIV-1 now or in 1970. 60% homology is a very distant relationship. If Segal is so convinced, why doesn't he make the construct and see what kind of virus it makes. Would it infect human cells? Would it kill T cells (Visna does not)?

Moreover, HTLV-1 was discovered as a virus in 1978 but its genes were not defined until the 1980s, certainly the ones Segal talks about. For that matter, the Visna genes were also not well established until the 80s and perhaps even later than HTLV-1. I envision it to be almost totally impossible that the chemical equation he speaks about could have taken place even in 1978. Add to that the likelihood that HIV-1 was present in man before then, probably as far back as 1959 and you now reach absurdity. It just does not add up.

Where he is correct is that HIV-2 and SIV are very similar, one perhaps deriving from the other. You don't need a surgical insertion to visualize that.
Sincerely,
Antonio L. DiAngelo

He had finally said it: Nonsense! So it *is* possible to "make" new viruses. That much, at least, was clear. Segal doesn't understand homology and mutation rates? What doesn't he understand, exactly? He doesn't understand "the outcome"? He says in this case the outcome was AIDS. Segal should do an experiment and find out? Why should an experiment be necessary, if Tony is so sure that Segal is wrong?

Is he sure? First he says "Visna plus HTLV-1 in any arrangement does not make HIV-1 now or in 1970." Then he says he "*envisions* it to be *almost* totally impossible." Not so sure, after all.

Tony must know that Segal doesn't say that Visna kills T-cells. Sheep with Visna die because the macrophages, the large white blood cells, become infected in the earliest stage, not the T-4 cells. The infected macrophages then eventually destroy the thymus gland, which prevents the further development of T-4 cells and destroys the immune system. This is why HIV-infected chimpanzees do not develop AIDS. The T-4 cells in the monkeys are infected, but the macrophages remain healthy. In humans, the macrophages are infected, as in sheep. If Segal is right, then, the key to therapy is not in preventing the infection of the T-4 cells but in preventing the infected macrophages from destroying the thymus.

Not a word about the tat-genes. Why? It's an important point. Does HIV-1 have things that neither Visna nor HTLV-1 have or not? Segal says no, Tony says yes, then drops the point. Not a word about the MacArthur testimony, either.

I saw no point in continuing. Tony wasn't going to say more than he had, and I was not impressed. In fact, it was hard to believe he was being honest. He seemed to be dodging every point. Every time I threw him the ball, he just stepped out of the way and threw another ball back. What was a "simian AIDS virus"? Monkeys don't get AIDS. Tony never responded to my point about "making" the AIDS virus. Had this been a misunderstanding, a question of semantics?

I couldn't help remembering this a year and a half later, in March 1991, when I saw an interview on WorldNet, the USIA's satellite television network, with a chap named Todd Lowenthal, who looked a little like a llama and had an equally exotic job title, something like "Chief for Countering Soviet Disinformation." He used the Segal theory to explain what "disinformation" is. The theory was obviously false, said Lowenthal, because everybody knows that the AIDS virus is "far too complex to have been made by a scientist."

That was exactly what Tony had said. He had also said that if "we" had made it, we would be able to destroy it. But why should this be so?

Segal had dealt with all of the other points Tony brought up, as Tony presumably knew. What I wanted was a rebuttal to Segal, not simply a repetition of the claims that Segal had (seemingly) refuted, including the claim that there is evidence of AIDS before 1979. Segal has consistently argued that this evidence is inconclusive.

Almost a year after Tony's last letter, Segal published a short article in the *Rote Fahne* (Aug. 25, 1990) responding to the latest claim of evidence for AIDS before 1979. I sent a copy of the article to *The Lancet*, *Science*, *Nature*, and *Scientific American*, along with a cover letter asking for a response. Not one responded. I also decided to try Tony once more:

> Sept. 3, 1990
> Dear Tony,
>
> Enclosed is an article by Segal published here re. the Corbitt et al. study published in *The Lancet* (336, 51f., 1990), which I guess you know is a respected English medical journal. Corbitt et al. claim to show that a British sailor died indisputably of AIDS in 1959. Segal challenges this claim, as he has all the purported evidence of AIDS before 1979, saying they proved only that the sailor was infected with a retrovirus, not necessarily one that causes AIDS, it being now known that many people, perhaps half the population, are carriers of non-pathogenic retroviruses which have nothing to do with AIDS. What do you think?
>
> Segal was in Kassel for a talk in February, and I asked him the same question you ask in your letter of last November: If Visna + HTLV-1 = HIV-1, why doesn't he do an experiment and prove it? He said he would like to but it's not that simple. You need a P-4 laboratory and the virus specimens, and no one is about to make those available to him.
>
> An equally good question is, if he is wrong, why doesn't someone with the requisite facilities (e.g. the U.S. government) do the experiment and prove it? He could be invited as an observer to make sure he was convinced, then forced to retract his allegations.
>
> Just to say it's nonsense, even if nearly everyone who should know something about the matter says it, is not enough. Remember the Warren Commission? Besides, even crazier theories, e.g. the Duesberg idea that HIV does not cause AIDS at all, get plenty of exposure and debate. There is absolutely no reason why

Segal has not been discussed with equal fervor in the scientific community – unless that reason is political. This is the sad thing, because it shows that science stops where politics begins.

I guess I have been naive, but I have always wanted to believe that science had a special status and was somehow immune (to use a fateful word) to political pressures. Yes, that really was naive, I'm afraid. No one is more subject to pressure and manipulation than high tech scientists, who can work only in dependence on complicated (and all-powerful) institutional and financial structures.

In short, I have no doubt that – if Segal is right – enough pressure could be brought to bear, all over the world, to keep the lid on. There are plenty of examples of that.

I'm quite aware that having worked at the Frederick Cancer Research Facilities under Gallo, formerly the virus section at Ft. Detrick, you probably know a lot more about these things than you could admit. That too is very sad. I wish you could find some way to tell me what you really know.

All the best,
Mike

Sept. 11, 1990
Dear Mike,

I have never worked under Bob Gallo nor in Gallo's laboratory at the Frederick Cancer Research Facilities. There is also nothing secret or occult. Strike all of that from your mind.

Your apparent obsession with Segal is difficult to comprehend. There are many more important things to do than to rebut a theory that makes no scientific sense. Our focus is on a vaccine for AIDS and other measures that will help eradicate the disease and relieve suffering. This requires all of our attention, energy and skills. Scientific truth lies in reproducible experiments, which automatically means that these must fall in the public domain.

With best wishes,
Antonio L. DiAngelo

Never worked directly under Gallo? He had worked as a consultant to Frederick – that was in *Who's Who*. Not a word about Segal's article in *The Lancet*. Nothing secret or occult? Science always in the public domain? Who did he think he was kidding?

I felt there was nothing more I could say to Antonio L. DiAngelo. I wished that just once he had signed his name "Tony."

Tony wasn't the only scientist I talked to. One German researcher said sure, it was possible to mix viruses together. Yes, he had heard of Segal, but he didn't know a lot about it. In fact, he said, only scientists doing AIDS research would be able to answer my questions. But he didn't think Visna + HTLV-1 would make HIV-1. Why not? He couldn't explain.

Another scientist, a woman who is also an environmental activist, said she thought it was possible that the AIDS virus was produced by mistake in a laboratory, most likely in experiments with monkeys, but that Segal's particular theory was wrong. Why? She couldn't explain. She was no longer pursuing the origin of AIDS question. She had butted her head against stone walls for a while and finally just gave up. I was beginning to see what she meant.

I talked with one of the representatives of the Greens in the European Parliament

in Strasbourg. He wasn't interested. There were more important concerns than the origins of AIDS, he said. People were more concerned about the dangers of applying genetic engineering to agriculture, for example. Really? How could they expect to find out the truth about agricultural products if we can't find out the truth about AIDS? How did he know what people were concerned about? Here was one person who was concerned – me. What did he know but what he read in the press, just like the rest of us? Segal did not appear in the press (except occasionally in the *Rote Fahne*), so as far as this supposedly progressive politician was concerned, the origin of AIDS was not a public issue. I thought he might be interested in making it a public issue, but I was wrong.

Segal was scheduled to give a talk at the university in Kassel in September 1990. By then I knew his arguments, and I also knew that the problem for me – as well as for him – was to find someone willing and qualified to debate with him. I called the director of a German AIDS research institute, introduced myself and asked him if he would be willing to answer some questions. He was willing, and friendly enough, but that was all. Our telephone conversation went as follows (again, the name is fictitious):

> Hoffmann: Ok, shoot.
> MM: Have you heard of a man called Jacob Segal, from Humboldt University in Berlin?
> Hoffmann: Yes, I've heard of him.
> MM: Well, I'm not a biologist, but the reason I'm calling is that he's coming here to Kassel the day after tomorrow to give a lecture. You probably know that his work is very controversial...
> Hoffmann (chuckling): That's putting it mildly!
> MM: From what I've heard, he can't even get people to debate with him. That's why I'm calling. He's giving a speech here at the university next week, and I don't know anyone in Kassel involved in AIDS research, but a friend of mine told me you are one of the most competent men in the field, and I wanted to know if you or anybody at your institute could come to Kassel as a kind of counterpoint. Not necessarily to debate with him, but I think it would be good if a different point of view could be presented too.
> Hoffmann: I'll tell you, unless Segal has something new, it would be a waste of time. I remember a lecture he gave in Aachen. He claimed the AIDS virus was created in American biological warfare laboratories and set loose in order to get rid of homosexuals and control the overpopulation problem in Africa.

This was wrong, but I didn't correct him. Segal says the virus escaped accidentally, with prisoners who had been inoculated with it in an experiment, in return for their freedom. When no symptoms of disease showed up after six months, they were released prematurely, since no one knew the disease would have such a long incubation period. Some of the ex-prisoners joined the gay scene in New York, whence it spread. Segal has never implied that it was anything but an accident, an experiment gone awry.

But Hoffmann's inaccuracy was interesting. It showed how closely linked the two thoughts are, and how easily Theory A, that AIDS is laboratory product (which Segal endorses), leads to Theory B, that AIDS is biological warfare (which Segal does not endorse). If Theory A is correct, Theory B is at least conceivable.

> Hoffmann: Segal's first mistake was that he claimed it happened in 1976. That's completely impossible, from a bio-engineering point of view. Nobody could have spliced genes together with that result then, and I doubt that it's possible today.

He doubts that it's possible? He doesn't know? Has he tried it? If not, how can he be so sure?

> Hoffmann: But the most important proof that his theory is absolute nonsense is the fact that we have evidence of AIDS infections long before 1976.

1979, I corrected him silently. That was when the first AIDS case was documented in New York, which Segal still insists was in fact the first case, despite the so-called evidence (which Segal disputes) to the contrary.

> Hoffmann: That takes care of Mr. Segal. It's a completely idiotic hypothesis, and I hope that Segal, who has done some reasonable work in other areas, has found something else to spend his time on. Or how do you see it?
> MM: I'm not in a position to judge, as a layman. That's just the point. I've read his book and I must say his arguments are plausible, but I have no way to evaluate them scientifically. I do know that he has counterarguments to what you've just said. I can't explain it in detail, but he says what other researchers have considered evidence of AIDS before 1979 is inconclusive, that there may be evidence of retroviruses, but not of AIDS in particular.
> Hoffmann: Nonsense. I saw cases myself in the sixties in Africa, even photographed them, and there are blood samples which have been preserved and documented. If Segal still wants to stick to the 1979 in New York thesis, he really ought to hang it up.
> MM: He puts a lot of faith in the gene-sequencing analysis or gene-mapping and Chandra's work showing the electro-focusing of the reverse transcription.

I had no idea what I was talking about, but I trusted that Hoffmann did.

> MM: Segal says this kind of analysis proves conclusively that the similarity of Visna and HTLV-1 with HIV-1 is so great that it could not have occurred otherwise, that is, naturally – that it must have resulted from gene-splicing. So there we are. He says the degree of similarity proves it beyond the shadow of a doubt, and other scientists say it proves nothing at all. What is the layman supposed to think?
> Hoffmann: As far as I'm concerned, Segal is just being stubborn. The whole thing is very far-fetched. Of course you can talk forever about something, but in the scientific world you can't just go to a university somewhere and give a lecture and expect other people to jump to defend themselves or even respond. We have no time for that. Segal's theory is passé. The best you can say is that it was an idea once, a suspicion, but there isn't the slightest proof of it, never has been.
> MM: Still, it's a horrific accusation, and I don't say that just because I'm an American and it's my government that's being accused of being responsible for AIDS. I would think someone, not the least the American government, would want to prove him wrong. What he says sounds scientific enough to me, but of course I'm no judge. Aren't there any serious scientific rebuttals to Segal's theory?

Hoffmann: Serious scientists haven't dealt with it for the simple reason that it is ridiculous.
MM: Yes, but it continues to circulate, and if it is nonsense it's not doing anybody any good. I'm not a superpatriot, in fact I'm pretty critical of my government, but I don't want to think of it as responsible for creating AIDS if it's not true. I hope it's not, but I just can't be as sure of that as you are. That's my problem. How can I convince myself that it's nonsense? I need to have a counterargument that makes at least equally good sense. Isn't there some way to prove that he's wrong – by experiment, for example? He says any trained laboratory technician could make HIV-1 out of Visna and HTLV-1 in less than two weeks. Why not try that and see?
Hoffmann: Such nonsense! Look, I have a young biochemist sitting here next to me. Let me repeat that for his benefit. [To his colleague] Segal claims any lab technician could produce HIV-1 from Visna and something else in two weeks.

A loud guffaw could be heard in the background.

Hoffmann (chuckling): He [his colleague] just fell off his chair! Absolutely ridiculous! You know, one thing really irritates me a bit. How can a German university invite someone like this to give a talk? Who's behind it? These are really stupid, completely outdated ideas.
MM: I think someone in the public health office organized it.
Hoffmann: Are you sure it wasn't one of the leftist student groups? You know who publishes his book, don't you – the MLPD, the Marxist-Leninist Partei Deutschlands. Maybe it was the Stasi [East German intelligence]. That's a joke, of course.
MM: I don't know. But why should it matter? This is supposedly a question of science.
Hoffmann: You should look into it, because I have good contacts with the Federal Ministry of Health, and I can tell you that we dismissed the Segal theory from the very beginning as totally absurd. The lecture in Aachen that I attended some years ago was organized by the Greens, whose environmental ideas aren't bad, but they're terribly left.
MM: My problem is simply that I would like for Segal to be wrong, but I can't convince myself of that without counterarguments in some form or other, in a debate or a scientific journal, or whatever. As long as his ideas are not discussed, and as you say simply dismissed out of hand, I can't resolve it in my mind.
Hoffmann: What do your American friends and colleagues think of all this?
MM: They don't even know about it. Segal's book hasn't been published in English.
Hoffmann: Well, that should tell you something. You have to remember that we – at least at my institute – are underfinanced, understaffed, and we have a lot more important things to spend our time on than Mr. Segal's silly theories. We think the best thing is to ignore him completely. You can lose months trying to refute whatever crackpot claims he might make. He has no proof at all, but the other guy, he has to have proof! That stuff about anybody being able to make HIV in the laboratory, for instance. Totally impossible.

Why months? I thought. Segal says it can be done easily, in two weeks, by anybody with access to the component viruses and research facilities. Hoffmann had such access, presumably. He could do the experiment, and if it was negative, it would be good publicity. I could picture the headline: "Hoffmann Proves Segal a Quack – U.S.

Government Not Guilty." Wouldn't that be worth a few days' work?

> MM: There's also that Pentagon document from 1969. I know that's authentic, because I've seen it. That proves that the government did want to create an AIDS-like virus, and considered it feasible, as early as 1969.
> Hoffmann (ignoring this point): I suspect my American colleagues think the same way I do, that the best way to handle such nonsense is to ignore it. Let it play itself out, die a natural death, which it will because there's nothing to sustain it. Just wild hypotheses. That's why he goes to universities like Kassel, which doesn't have a medical school and might have a strong leftist contingent, so he thinks he can get away with it.

Handle it? This didn't sound very scientific. I didn't want him to handle it, I wanted him to refute it, if he could.

> MM: That's why I'd like to get someone like you or somebody from your institute to come here and debate with him.
> Hoffmann: No, I'm sorry, absolutely not. We really have better things to do. There's a saying: The more water you pour on the wheel, the more it turns. The best thing is just to let Segal run himself out. There are plenty of idiotic theories that can't be scientifically disproved. We can't spend our time refuting every ideologue that comes along. Maybe philosophers have time for that, but we don't. If I refute him it means I take him seriously, and I don't. I think he's a nut.
> MM: All right, Professor, I guess I'll just have to see how it goes. I mean, I don't have that much time either. Certainly not enough to try to become a microbiologist at this stage of the game. There must be a better way, but I don't know what it is.
> Hoffmann: Why bother with it then? Who's forcing you to go to this lecture?
> MM: Well, nobody, of course. I'm just interested. Thank you very much for your time, Professor Hoffmann.
> Hoffmann: Not at all.

I was getting pretty discouraged. Another year went by, and I decided to make one more stab at the "science" question. I made up the following questionnaire and sent it to all the AIDS researchers whose addresses I could find:

> *I am a layman who has been trying for years, without success, to get a straightforward answer to a straightforward question on a matter of science. Hence this survey, which I hope you will help me with, because whatever the results, it should show something.*
> *1) Is it possible to produce HIV-1 or HIV-2 in the laboratory (by manipulating or combining other organisms or substances by gene surgery or other means)?*
> _____ *Yes.*
> _____ *No.*
> _____ *I don't know, because*
> _____ *no one has done the work to find out.*
> _____ *it is not scientifically possible to find out.*
> _____ *the information cannot be divulged for security reasons*
> _____ *I have not looked into the question.*
> _____ *(other reasons – use reverse side if necessary):*
> *If the answer to 1) is "Yes":*

2) With what components?
3) Since what year has this been possible (using either "shotgun" – trial-and-error – methods or more precise methods)?
In any case, bibliographical references and/or comments will be appreciated (use reverse side if necessary):
The information below will be kept strictly confidential.
Name:
Address:
Professional position:
Would you like to receive the results of this survey?
Name and address of others who could respond to this survey:

In April 1992 I received what I expect will be the last reply to my questionnaire, unless I send it out again. It was from an American professor of pharmacology, whom I'll call Professor Smith. I had not sent the questionnaire to him, so someone had forwarded it. Here is my reply to him:

June 6, 1992
Dear Prof. Smith,

Thank you very much for responding to my questionnaire. Your reply is in fact the most important one I have received, and I've been walking around with it now in my briefcase ever since I got it, not quite sure what to do next. Perhaps you can help me.

Let me first tell the results so far (without mentioning names, since I promised not to). Of the couple of dozen people I sent the questionnaire to, 8 people have replied.

5 said "No" (not possible to produce HIV-1 or -2 in the laboratory).

2 (one was you) said "Yes." Another person said "Yes – in theory, but not practical."

The other unequivocal "Yes" came from someone who is apparently "only" a secondary school science teacher, but he is writing a book on the subject and enclosed an extensive bibliography. His answer to "With what components?" was:

> HIV-1: Visna, CAEV, BVV + minor component, either from another virus, or picking segments of original human DNA. HIV-2: SIV (SMM) + minor segments picked after selection from human cell culture (evolution in test tube) – the reverse may also be true.

His answer to "Since what year has this been possible?" was:

> HIV-1: trial-and-error, since ca. 1970. HIV-2: since the exploration of the SIVs, ca. 1985, by mistake probably earlier.

The "theoretically Yes" answer was from an American researcher and professor, whose answer to "With what components?" was:

> One could provide equivalent genes from other retroviruses and then synthesize those unique to HIV.

His answer to "Since what year has this been possible?" was:

> (underlining "possible"): "Mid-1980s."

The other 5 respondents – a couple of whom are "heavyweights" in the field (since even I have heard of them) – said "No" categorically, without further comments, except for one person, (professor, MD, public health scientist), who added to his "No":

I'm not a molecular biologist etc. but am virtually certain, from reading and discussions, that HIV-1 and HIV-2 arose from "wild" viruses and that when they arose we did not have the technology to create them. We may however be developing the technology which could allow us to produce "new" or modified dangerous viruses in the future. (But if we use the technology reasonably we can use it against disease.)

I think from these results you can see why your response strikes me as extremely significant. Even if it had been only 1 out of 100, it would have been significant.

What I would like to do now is write back to the other respondents and see if I can elicit a response to what you have said. I will not identify you, of course, unless you wish, but if there is anything you can add to what you wrote on the questionnaire (further remarks, bibliographical references), I would like to include it.

You wrote, in case you don't recall, in answer to "With what components?":

> Ribonucleotide triphosphates, enzymes, salts & buffer, RNA synthesizing machine.

In answer to "Since what year has this been possible?," you wrote:

> HIV-1 1985; HIV-2 1986 (once the nucleotide sequence of the viruses was known).

I find it very difficult to understand, if this is only a matter of science, why even my little survey has produced such different answers.

I purposely limited my question and treated it as a purely scientific one, because I know that the further questions and implications are highly political and sensitive (to put it mildly). I don't want to ask you to comment on any of that, but if you wish to (just for my information, not for the letter I'm thinking of sending to the other respondents), of course I would be very interested to know your opinion.

I assume that you know what I'm talking about: the question of an artificial origin of AIDS has been around for some time, though ignored by the mass media. There are the recent polio (and earlier smallpox) vaccine theories, the theories of Jakob Segal, John Seale, Robert Strecker, etc. If the viruses cannot be produced artificially *now*, however, the question of an (accidental) artificial origin some years ago, though it does not disappear, is more speculative. If the viruses *can* be produced in the laboratory now, as you say they can, the next question is clear: How can one be sure that this capability did not exist prior to 1985-86 (e.g. in secret military research, the results of which can remain unpublished and unknown even in the "scientific community" for years)? (I don't know if you are aware that the DOD wanted, considered it possible, and asked Congress for the money to create an AIDS-like virus – though the term "AIDS" was not used – as early as 1969. I

have the documentation if you'd like to see it.)

But as I said, I don't want to ask you to speculate on these questions. My primary purpose is still to get a reasonably satisfying "scientific" answer to the question I have posed. You have said the viruses can be made in the laboratory today, and that is certainly reason enough to wonder why the others say no. No one said they didn't know, that the answer is not yet known, unknowable, etc., although I specifically mentioned these possibilities. So I am left with flatly contradictory opinions by presumably equally qualified experts. Though obviously this may happen on many questions, I don't see how it is possible on this particular question, because it is testable by experiment.

What would be necessary to prove that what you say is correct – which would mean, of course, that the others are wrong? Has anyone actually made HIV-1 or -2 in the lab? Would that be the only incontrovertible proof that it is possible? Would it be difficult? Time-consuming? Legal? Would you need access to controlled substances or special facilities (e.g. a P-4 lab)?

Sincerely,
Michael Morrissey

I did not hear from Professor Smith again.

3. Conspiracy theories

I felt that I had given it my best shot. I hadn't heard much lately from Segal, either, but after all, he was in his eighties. He published another book in 1991 called *AIDS – Zellphysiologie, Pathologie und Therapie* (Essen: Neuer Weg), but it is a highly technical work and I haven't read it, nor have I heard of any reactions to it. He doesn't discuss the question of origin in this book, but since it is based on the thesis that HIV-1 is essentially a form of Visna, if this work is scientifically sound it will support his origins thesis. But how, if ever, will I know that?

In January 1992 a German television program repeated the old accusation that Segal had developed his origins theory for the Stasi, the (former) East German intelligence service. Segal responded as follows (my translation):

Public Statement by Prof. Jakob Segal

On January 28, 1991, the German television program "Panorama" claimed the theory that the AIDS virus HIV-1 was developed for military purposes by the Pentagon was an invention of the (former) East German intelligence service (Stasi). The writers Stefan Heym (East) and Mario Simmel (West) were said to have fallen for this lie and helped to spread it further.

This claim is completely false. The suspicion that HIV-1 originated in the laboratory was discussed as early as 1984 at the annual meeting of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. Then the American researchers Robert Gallo and Max Essex launched a counter-theory suggesting an African origin, which was publicly described by the World Health Organization as scientifically untenable. This theory contained such obvious errors that I became curious and joined the discussion in 1985. By careful analysis of molecular genetic and immunological data I was able to prove that the AIDS virus in fact resulted from splicing part of the human-cancer-causing virus HTLV-1 into the virus that causes

the fatal sheep disease known as Visna.

In the meantime official documentation has been discovered which proves that the Pentagon requested 10 million dollars as early as 1969 for the purpose of developing a virus that would destroy the human immune system, i.e. a synthetic AIDS-like virus. My theory is thus supported by the documentary record, and no convincing scientific arguments have appeared to refute it. Nevertheless, for reasons that are all too clear, no reputable scientific journal will publish my work.

The first non-scientific journal to publish my theory, along with the similar ones of John Seale of Great Britain and the American Robert Strecker, was the London *Sunday Times* in the fall of 1986. On the basis of comprehensive materials I distributed, some African scientists then put together a brochure which was distributed at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Harare. After that my theory began to arouse some interest in official circles. Representatives from the US embassy, the East German Ministry of Health and the Stasi talked with me. I was invited to give a series of lectures in West Germany with well-qualified discussion partners, but I had much worse luck in my own country of East Germany. There I was not allowed to present my views in any journals, and the only lecture I gave to a sizeable audience was organized by a dissident church group.

In view of this history, it is ridiculous to claim that the Stasi thought up this theory and ordered me to propagate it. Nobody in the Stasi had the technical expertise to have produced such a theory. It was my work and mine alone, and I refuse to allow a few sensation-hungry journalists to deprive me of the credit for it.

January 30, 1992
Prof. Dr. sc. Jakob Segal
Leipziger Str. 43, O-1080 Berlin, Germany

This had no discernible consequences. It seemed the question of the origin of AIDS was taboo, and had been for several years. Segal could be denounced, but not discussed.

Then, on March 3, 1992, I saw a surprising report on CNN, which I had recorded and was thus able to transcribe:

CNN: A Texas researcher has a new theory about how the AIDS virus developed. He says it mutated from a virus that causes an AIDS-like disease in monkeys and that humans were inoculated with it. His claim is detailed in *Rolling Stone* magazine. "The Origin of AIDS" proposes a shocking theory: that the AIDS virus, now known to have existed in monkeys, may have spread to humans through, of all things, experimental polio vaccinations.
Tom Curtis (freelance writer): The polio vaccine did great things in terms of sparing us, you know, the dreaded scourge of that period, but it would be a terrible irony to find that it brought another scourge. I sort of hope against hope that this hypothesis is wrong, but it is testable.
CNN: Curtis found that a quarter million people in Africa were inoculated by American doctors with an experimental polio vaccine. That vaccine was produced using the kidney tissues of monkeys. More recent research has shown that some monkeys carry a virus similar to the one that now causes AIDS.

> Curtis: "If those monkey kidneys were contaminated, it would be an efficient way to spread the disease, that is to say, the disease of AIDS."
> CNN: Far-fetched? Yes, according to the polio-pioneering doctors quoted in Curtis's story. One is quoted as saying, "You're beating a dead horse. It does not make sense. But one AIDS researcher is not dismissing the theory.
> Dr. Robert Bohannon (AIDS researcher): Nobody will ever know unless those stocks are turned over for analysis.
> CNN: Dr. Robert Bohannon has done AIDS research at Baylor and M.D. Anderson. He has requested samples of the original polio vaccines so that he can test them for AIDS-related viruses. One researcher has sent him some very early vaccine, another has not responded. The federal government, which also holds some of the original vaccines, is considering his request. If he does find the AIDS-related virus in the vaccines, he says the polio researchers themselves should not be faulted.
> Bohannon: If they had known that there was anything like HIV or SIV in those, I'm sure they would not have used them. They would have found something else.
> CNN: So for now Bohannon continues to wait for more samples to come from the government and from polio researchers – samples of polio vaccine that could help to answer the question, Where did AIDS come from? Elsewhere, Dr. Bohannon's theory of how AIDS developed has not yet been reviewed by other scientists or appeared in scientific journals.

This was the first discussion of the origins question I had heard or read in the media in years, outside of the *Rote Fahne*, and here it was on CNN! I was astounded. This theory was considerably less explosive than Segal's, but the essential implication was not that different: AIDS was created by human error. Someone was responsible. Maybe not the US government, but someone.

A couple of weeks later there was another interesting news item. MacNeil-Lehrer reported on 3/25/92 that nearly 50% of the 210,000 documented AIDS cases in the US were blacks, Hispanic, native Americans or Asians – blacks forming 31% of the new cases, although they are only 12% of the population. Blacks and minorities, then, are clearly getting hit disproportionately hard by AIDS, just as gays, intravenous drug users and prostitutes are.

These figures referred only to the US. Worldwide, given the proliferation of the disease in Africa and the rest of the Third World, the disproportion of non-whites getting the disease is much greater. Surveys reported at the 4th International Conference on AIDS in Africa, held in Marseilles on Oct. 18-20, 1989, gave the percentage of HIV infections ranging from 10% to 60%, depending on the population tested. The percentage for the US as a whole is only 0.4% (about 1 million in a population of 250 million).

The effect of the disease, in other words, regardless of the causes, is genocidal. The non-white populations of Africa, India and Asia are being decimated while the predominately white populations of Europe and the US are escaping relatively unscathed. The same is true of the people living under Third World conditions within the US, who are mostly non-white.

Steven Thomas, a public health researcher at the University of Maryland who researched 1000 blacks in five cities, said on the MacNeil-Lehrer program:

> Consistently, people wanted to know, was it man-made, was it a form of genocide? Are the numbers from the government true? We now have sufficient data to demonstrate that mistrust of government reports on AIDS is real, and that the belief that AIDS is a form of genocide is real.

Robert MacNeil commented:

> Thomas says that mistrust of government springs in part from blacks' lasting memories of incidents like the Tuskegee syphilis study (*Condemned to Die for Science*) undertaken by the federal government in 1932. 400 Alabama blacks who had syphilis were studied and later deprived of penicillin, decades after it became the standard treatment.

And Thomas continued:

> It is part of the subconscious history that all black people carry, in terms of their mistrust of those who come into their communities offering help, because that's how the Tuskegee study began, with an effort to improve health care delivery to blacks in the deep rural south.

Again, I was astounded. I hadn't heard of this. Nobody was talking about Segal, but apparently millions of black Americans suspected that AIDS was a form of genocide! This went a lot further than Segal had gone.

The year that Robert MacNeil had mentioned, 1932, the year of the Tuskegee syphilis study, struck me, because that was also the year of the Third International Conference of Eugenics, which I had recently read about. It's sponsors included some famous names: Mrs. H. B. Dupont, Col. William Draper (an investment banker associated with the Harriman interests), Mrs. Averell Harriman (mother of Democratic Party leader Averell Harriman), Dr. J. Harvey Kellog (of Kellog's cereals), Major Leonard Darwin (son of Charles Darwin), Mrs. John T. Pratt and Mrs. Walter Jennings (both of Standard Oil), Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland H. Dodge (of Phelps-Dodge mining interests). Henry Fairchild Osborn, a nephew of J. P. Morgan and vice-president of the conference, opened it by saying:

> I have reached the opinion that over-population and underemployment may be regarded as twin sisters. From this point of view I even find that the United States [then with a population of 112 million] is overpopulated at the present....In nature the less fitted individuals would gradually disappear, but in civilization we are keeping them in the community in the hopes that in brighter days they may find employment. This is only another instance of humane civilization going directly against the order of nature and encouraging the survival of the unfittest.

This seems less than innocuous considering that the conference unanimously elected Dr. Ernst Rudin as President of the International Federation of Eugenics Organizations. Rudin became the architect of Hitler's "racial hygiene" policies and trained the medical personnel who conducted the Nazis' first extermination program, killing 40,000 mental patients. The Nazi "eugenics" (i.e. racist) policies were supported until the late 1930's by the Eugenics Record Office in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, which had been founded and endowed by the Harriman family in 1910. Cold Spring

Harbor Laboratory, today a major center of molecular biological research (headed by James Watson, the co-discoverer of DNA), had itself been founded six years earlier under the name "Station for Experimental Evolution" by similarly elite financial interests: the J. P. Morgan, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and Carnegie families.

Obviously, the power elite has been interested in eugenics, now known as genetic engineering, for a long time.

The 1932 Tuskegee syphilis study was not the first time blacks have been disproportionately affected by diseases which the government wilfully neglected. In the early years of this century, hundreds of thousands of Americans died every year from pellagra and related opportunistic diseases. Almost all the deaths occurred in the rural south, and 50% of the victims were black. Although the cause of pellagra – niacin deficiency, which can be cured by a balanced diet – was discovered in 1915 by Dr. Joseph Goldberger of the US Public Health Service, these findings were not accepted and acted upon until the mid-1930s.

During these two decades, in which 6 million people died of the disease, the Eugenics Record Office conducted a massive campaign to discredit Goldberger's work and continue the idea that pellagra resulted from a hereditary defect. Charles Davenport, the Office director and chairman of the National Pellagra Commission, continued to argue that susceptibility to pellagra was inherited, just as the susceptibility to tuberculosis among Irish Americans was, so that all attempts to improve dietary or sanitary conditions among the affected groups were futile.

4. The "population bomb"

"Eugenics" today, of course, is a taboo concept, since Hitler showed us all too clearly what could be made of it. Since the war, however, the closely related question of "population control" has been very much a part of elite agendas: e.g., the Population Council, founded by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1952; the Population Crisis Committee, founded by General Draper in 1966, which included Gen. Maxwell Taylor, McGeorge Bundy and Robert McNamara; the Office of Population Affairs, founded by Henry Kissinger in 1966 as part of the State Department.

The importance of population control to the US government is well illustrated by a secret document prepared under the direction of Henry Kissinger in 1974 called "National Security Study Memorandum 200." It was not declassified until 1989 and finally released by the National Archives in 1990 – 16 years after completion (12/10/74). The very fact that this document was classified is a good example of how fascistic the notion of "national security" has become. How could such a document endanger national security, and why shouldn't American citizens have a right to read it?

The answer is stated clearly in the document itself. The government's concern with Third World population growth might be interpreted as "imperialistic":

> The US can help to minimize charges of an imperialist motivation behind its support of population activities by repeatedly asserting that such support derives from a concern with (a) the right of the individual to determine freely and responsibly their number and spacing of children...and (b) the fundamental social and economic development of poor countries..." (p. 115).

In other words, propaganda must be used to disguise the true nature of US interest in population control, and for the same reason the American people were not allowed to know what policies their "democratic" government was implementing in their name. The real government interest in population control was, and is, not humanitarian at all but political and economic:

> The political consequences of current population factors in the LDCs [Less Developed Countries] – rapid growth, internal migration, high percentages of young people, slow improvement in living standards, urban concentrations, and pressures for foreign migration – are damaging to the internal stability and international relations of countries in whose advancement the US is interested, thus creating political or even national security problems for the US (p. 10).
>
> If these [adverse socio-economic] conditions result in expropriation of foreign interests, such action, from an economic viewpoint, is not in the best interests of either the investing country or the host government (p. 11).
>
> While specific goals in this area are difficult to state, our aim should be for the world to achieve a replacement level of fertility, (a two-child family on the average), by about the year 2000. This will require the present 2% growth rate to decline to 1.7% within a decade and to 1.1% by 2000. Compared to the UN medium projection, this goal would result in 500 million fewer people in 2000 and about 3 billion fewer in 2050. Attainment of this goal will require greatly intensified population programs. A basis for developing national population growth control targets to achieve this world target is contained in the World Population Plan of Action.
>
> The World Population Plan of Action is not self-enforcing and will require vigorous efforts by interested countries, UN agencies and other international bodies to make it effective. US leadership is essential. The strategy must include the following elements and actions:
>
> (a) Concentration on key countries.
>
> Assistance for population moderation should give primary emphasis to the largest and fastest growing developing countries where there is special US political and strategic interests. Those countries are: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Indonesia, Brazil, the Philippines, Thailand, Egypt, Turkey, Ethiopia and Colombia. Together, they account for 47% of the world's current population increase. (It should be recognized that at present AID bilateral assistance to some of these countries may not be acceptable.) Bilateral [US] assistance, to the extent that funds are available, will be given to other countries, considering such factors as population growth, need for external assistance, long-term US interests and willingness to engage in self-help....At the same time, the US will look to the multilateral agencies – especially the UN Fund for Population Activities which already has projects in over 80 countries – to increase population assistance on a broader basis with increased US contributions (p. 14-15).

In other words, food and economic assistance will be used to blackmail countries the US considers overpopulated – especially the 13 "key" countries named – into reducing

their population growth. Otherwise these superfluous populations might cause "interruptions of supply," since "the US economy will require large and increasing amounts of minerals from abroad, especially from less developed countries" (p. 43). For example,

> Bangladesh is now a fairly solid supporter of Third World positions, advocating better distribution of the world's wealth and extensive trade concessions to poor nations. As its problems grow and its ability to gain assistance fails to keep pace, Bangladesh's positions on international issues likely will become radicalized, inevitably in opposition to US interests on major issues as it seeks to align itself with others to force adequate aid" (p. 80).

Heaven forbid that the starving millions in Bangladesh should become so "radicalized" as to question the right of Americans, who constitute 6% of the world population, to consume 33% of the world's goods!

The answer to this threat is not only economic blackmail but energetic assistance in family planning, though one must be careful to avoid "charges of an imperialist motivation" by emphasizing that it is all for their own good and working through national leaders and international institutions:

> Beyond seeking to reach and influence national leaders, improved worldwide support for population-related efforts should be sought through increased emphasis on mass media and other population education and motivation programs by the UN, USIA and USAID. We should give higher priorities in our information programs worldwide for this area and consider expansion of collaborative arrangements with multilateral institutions in population education programs" (p. 117).

Nevertheless, "some controversial, but remarkably successful, experiments in India in which financial incentives, along with other motivational devices, were used to get large numbers of men to accept vasectomies" (p. 138). In Brazil, too, extraordinary "success" has been achieved in persuading women to practice birth control, primarily with the pill and sterilization, a success many attribute to the unspoken pressures of the IMF and the World Bank. Indeed, such achievements are quite in line with the thinking of Robert McNamara, who became president of the World Bank (1968-81) after presiding over the Vietnam War as Secretary of Defense (1961-68).

On October 2, 1979, McNamara told a group of international bankers:

> We can begin with the most critical problem of all, population growth. As I have pointed out elsewhere, short of nuclear war itself, it is the gravest issue that the world faces over the decades immediately ahead...If current trends continue, the world as a whole will not reach replacement-level fertility – in effect, an average of two children per family – until about the year 2020. That means that some 70 years later the world's population would finally stabilize at about 10 billion individuals compared with today's 4.3 billion.
>
> We call it stabilized, but what kind of stability would be possible? Can we assume that the levels of poverty, hunger, stress, crowding and frustration that such a situation could cause in the developing nations – which by then would contain 9 out of every 10 human beings on earth – would be likely to assure social stability?

> Or political stability? Or, for that matter, military stability? It is not a world that any of us would want to live in.
>
> Is such a world inevitable? It is not, but there are only two possible ways in which a world of 10 billion people can be averted. Either the current birth rates must come down more quickly. Or the current death rates must go up. There is no other way.
>
> There are, of course, many ways in which the death rates can go up. In a thermonuclear age, war can accomplish it very quickly and decisively. Famine and disease are nature's ancient checks on population growth, and neither one has disappeared from the scene.
>
> To put it simply: Excessive population growth is the greatest obstacle to the economic and social advancement of most societies of the developing world.

This Malthusian point of view is obviously deeply entrenched among the governing elite. Although "population control" sounds different from "eugenics," it amounts to the same thing. The populations that are being controlled, that supposedly need to be controlled, are not those of Europe and the United States but those of the "LDCs" – exactly the same populations that the eugenicists would consider less productive, less civilized and less worthy of proliferation.

This is of course a philosophy that dares not speak its name, hence the secrecy of documents such as NSSM 200. The facts are clear. Birth control is not sufficient to achieve the "stabilization" goals that McNamara, Kissinger et al. have set. Overpopulation remains "life-threatening," an opinion confirmed by many supposedly politically neutral organizations such as World Watch and the Club of Rome.

Since it is impolitic to speak of the "population problem" in plain words – that is, too many poor people – in recent years it has become integrated within a complex of problems called "development" and "the environment." Again, commentators are chary of formulating their thoughts on the relationship between population growth and development, and between population growth and pollution, in plain terms, but the implications are always clear.

"There is no doubt that population growth is inextricably linked to development," says the *Washington Post* ("Forge a Population Plan," reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune*, 6/8/92:6). "International efforts to help countries out of poverty founder when very high rates of population growth outstrip progress." The link, clearly, is that overpopulation causes poverty and hinders development. "But this truth, so obvious to economists and other planners, cannot be presented as a demand or used as a threat. Language matters....In fact, the debate should be framed in terms of 'family planning'..." In other words, the victims are to blame, but we shouldn't tell them that in so many words.

The poor are not only responsible for their own poverty because they reproduce too fast, they are also responsible for pollution. This logic seems compelling when we see the pictures of teeming multitudes living in squalor. There are too many of them, we think, so they are poor and forced to live in their own dirt. Herein lies the fallacy: it is *their* dirt, not ours.

Pollution in a global sense has little to do with poverty and everything to do wealth, but the contradictory assumption persists. In covering the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio,

Eugene Robinson of the *Washington Post* writes that the "ranks of the have-nots continue to grow rapidly," and "UN demographers expect global population to double to more than 10 billion by the middle of the next century, with most of the increase coming in the poorest countries" ("One Summit, Differing Goals," reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune* 6/2/92:1). Robinson laments that "while the population boom has an impact on the whole range of environmental concerns – carbon-dioxide emissions, deforestation, water pollution, extinction of plant and animal species – the Rio summit is expected to skirt the people issue." It is the "people issue" – population growth – according to William Stevens of the *New York Times*, that "lies at the root of the global environmental problem" (6/15/92:2), meaning poor people, since they are the ones with the population boom, "along with rich countries' wasteful consumption patterns."

It may be true that overpopulation causes pollution, but it is the ranks of the haves, not of the have-nots, who are the problem. The same IHT article just quoted (6/2/92:1) acknowledges that "23% of the world's people receive 85% of its income." This same fifth of the population constitutes the industrialized world, which, as we can also read in the IHT, produces 80% of the pollution that (probably) causes global warming (5/21/92:3). The same is true of deforestation, water pollution, and species extinction. The rain forest is not being cut down to feed or house the indigenous population, but to satisfy the consumer demands and capitalist greed of the First World. As Paul Ehrlich said in a *Newsweek* interview, "the most serious population problem is in the United States" (5/25/92:56, international edition). The real threat to the environment is posed not by the poor but by the rich, as "a product of population and per-capita consumption."

Why are these facts consistently turned on their head? Because the burgeoning ranks of the poor threaten not the environment but the wealth, power, and "national security" of the ruling elite. The real problem, for the haves, is that too many have-nots leads to political instability, as NSSM 200 makes clear.

The propaganda is designed to disguise this truth. Who does not say to himself, seeing the pictures on TV of starving multitudes, "If only there weren't so *many* of them!" Who stops to think that they could say the same thing, with more justification, about us? Who is reminded that a fraction of the energy and funds our governments spend on weaponry could feed and house the entire world? The conclusion is taken for granted, though it is false: there's not enough to go around; there are too many people; we can't help them all without hurting ourselves; they want what we've got. Thomas Malthus elevated these principles of greed to economic "law": The population will always outgrow its ability to feed itself; therefore, control by war and natural catastrophe (famine, disease) is not only natural but necessary. We can assuage our consciences by donating to the Red Cross, but the poor bastards, most of them, will die anyway. It's in the nature of things. Nothing can be done.

Darwin contributed the doctrine of the survival of the fittest to this view of "natural order." If white Europeans survive at the expense of black Africans, if the rich survive at the expense of the poor, it's only "natural." Wars, too, are "natural." Men fight because only the fittest are destined to survive. Let the best men win. Death in battle is quicker and less painful, after all, than death by disease, starvation or natural catastrophe, which are the only alternatives for the "less fit" populations of the planet.

Malthus wrote at the beginning of the 19th century and Darwin somewhat later. Neither could have foreseen the technological achievements that have been made since. Few of us realize, either, the full potential of these achievements. When someone like Buckminster Fuller comes along and tells us we have the technological capability of providing the basic necessities of life to every human being on earth, with plenty of room to spare, we call him an eccentric, a hopeless dreamer, without bothering to find out if he is correct. Our view of reality has been conditioned by elite spokesmen like Robert McNamara, who envision a world of 10 billion people as unliveable, a horror second only to nuclear holocaust. We do not stop to calculate that even with 10 billion people, the average population density worldwide would be less than one-third that of former West Germany.

The greatest fallacy in the elitist Malthusian scenario, however, is the assumption that overpopulation causes poverty. The reverse is true: poverty causes overpopulation. Poverty can be reduced, of course, by reducing the number of poor people, which is what we really mean by "population control." It can also be reduced, however, by development, that is, by *humane* development, designed to eliminate rather than exploit poverty, which automatically reduces population growth. This is another much-disguised fact, but we need only look around us to see the proof. The most developed countries, and the ones with the highest level of equality in the distribution of wealth, are the ones whose populations have stabilized (Scandinavia, Germany). This is "natural," if anything is. Reproducing in quantity has always been the peasant's way of surviving from one generation to the next. It is nature's way of compensating the poor and oppressed.

And they know it! As Steven Thomas says, it is part of their "subconscious history." Of course "family planning" is doomed to fail when their subconscious history warns them to beware of "those who come into their communities offering help." The logic of having fewer children so as to be able to take better care of them doesn't work with them. They have nothing, so what can they give to two children that they cannot give to ten or twenty? The two would probably die, but of ten or twenty some would survive and perhaps improve their lot. This is the logic of the poor, learned and confirmed throughout history and applied instinctively.

The most effective method of birth control, therefore, is to fight poverty. The better off people are, the less they reproduce. As the standard of living improves, the birth rate decreases. This is confirmed by history and observation of the world around us. Malthus and Darwin's contemporaries did not have the technological means for doing this, but we do. We have the means to produce and distribute the necessities of life for every person on the planet, without anyone having to give up his TV set, car, house, etc. I suspect the Rockefellers and the Harrimans and the DuPonts could even keep their billions. I don't have the figures to prove it, but I'm sure one could produce them. The idea only seems so crazy because we have absorbed the propaganda to the contrary so thoroughly.

The rich, who disseminate the propaganda, are not interested in fighting poverty because they fear a redistribution of wealth. But they are in part victims of their own propaganda. Their fears are exaggerated: there *is* enough to go around. The world could remain as undemocratic as it is, with the same class differences, but the underclass could be lifted to a considerably less miserable state. This would also be a

safer world for the privileged, because the ranks of the have-nots, having a little more, would be less prone to revolt. The rich would still have their slaves – to fight their wars, run their factories, build their roads, make their Porsches and Lear jets and yachts and Rolexes, etc. – but they would be happier slaves.

Unfortunately, I doubt that this attitude is widespread on Wall Street or among the Fortune 500 or Social Register types. As I said, in part they are victims of their own propaganda. It wouldn't work, they would say. They would have to sacrifice too much. And who said happy slaves are good slaves? Give an inch, they'll take a mile. Feed, clothe and house them, and pretty soon they'll want leisure time. The idle mind being the devil's workshop, they'll soon start thinking, and then we'll really be in trouble. But the more important point, quite simply, is why should the rich and powerful give a hoot about the poor? Why should they care more than the rest of us? Given the choice – and we do have the choice – of letting the poor die off or eliminating poverty, the former solution is by far the easier and more practical one.

Still, it is not all that simple to let Malthus' and Darwin's "nature" take its course, because "nature" is not what it was a hundred years ago. Modern technology and medicine have changed things. The poor do not die fast enough anymore. There are not enough natural disasters, fewer fatal diseases. Nuclear war, as McNamara said, would solve the problem, but it is impractical. Family planning isn't effective enough. Mandatory birth control, as in China, is incompatible with the tenets of a democratic society. Famine is not effective in the long run, because societies that like to think of themselves as humane cannot tolerate pictures of starving babies forever. That leaves conventional warfare and disease as "natural" inhibitors of population growth.

War has always been an effective agent for population reduction in the Third World, but it is dangerous. Proxy wars have an insidious tendency to involve their sponsors, in one way or another. There is always the danger of their getting out of hand, especially with more and more nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in the hands of poor countries. There is the threat to Third World resources, such as oil, on which the rest of the world depends. Finally, there is the danger that the rich countries may get directly involved in the fighting – as in Vietnam.

Limited warfare (an oxymoron) is a compromise solution. It is true that nine years of war in Vietnam reduced the population of Southeast Asia by several million people, and the underclass population of the US also by tens of thousands. The point is made with unusual clarity in an early, excellent film about the JFK assassination called *Executive Action* (1973). In the film, Big Oil (Will Geer) pulls the strings from the top, and Burt Lancaster plays the role equivalent to General Y (Lansdale) in Oliver Stone's *JFK*, i.e. the operational head of the assassination project. Another character, played by Robert Ryan, is the middleman, apparently a media mogul (shown a number of times in what appears to be a television studio). Big Oil and his cohorts are greatly troubled by the test ban treaty, Kennedy's support of the civil rights movement, etc., and finally gives the go-ahead for the assassination when the White House announces the withdrawal plan on Oct. 2, 1963. This much is in line with the Stone movie, but the following brief dialogue between Ryan and Lancaster introduces a further dimension:

> Ryan: The real problem is this, James. In two decades there'll be 7 billion human beings on this planet, most of them brown, yellow or black, all of them hungry, all of them determined to love and swarm out of their breeding grounds into Europe and North America. Hence Vietnam. An all-out effort there will give us control of south Asia for decades to come, and with proper planning we can reduce the population to 550 million by the end of the century. I know, I've seen the data.
> Lancaster: We sound rather like gods reading the Doomsday Book, don't we?
> Ryan: Well, someone has to do it. Not only will the nations affected be better off, but the techniques developed there can be used to reduce our own excess population – blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, poverty-prone whites, and so forth.

But eventually, as Vietnam demonstrated, people get tired of war. Furthermore, conventional warfare does not kill enough people to make a significant difference in the population figures. What's a few million here, a few million there? These figures don't make a dent in the projections of population growth that have the power elite so worried.

5. AIDS as genocide?

McNamara spoke to his fellow bankers in 1979 of a world populated by 10 billion people by the year 2090 as "not a world that any of us would want to live in." If this is a horror vision, what must he think in 1992, when the projections are considerably more alarming? "UN demographers expect global population to double to more than 10 billion by the middle of the next century, with most of the increase coming in the poorest countries," says Eugene Robinson (op. cit.). McNamara's unliveable world is only 58 years away! This leaves us with the last of the Malthusian alternatives to nuclear war: disease.

Enter AIDS, in the same year (1979) that McNamara was describing Third World population growth as the greatest threat to mankind "short of nuclear war itself" and four years after the secret Kissinger study described it as a national security threat.

Technology, in the form of modern medicine, has the troublingly "unnatural" tendency to keep more people alive longer than was possible in Malthus' day, but AIDS, almost miraculously, has solved the problem. Provided a cure remains elusive for another decade or so, the population bomb will be at least partially defused. For the elite, given the choice between an "unliveable world" of 10 billion people and AIDS, the latter must come as a godsend.

In other words, AIDS may solve the "population problem." Not only will the "death rates" rise significantly, but they will rise in the right places, namely in the Third World. Since the populations being decimated by AIDS are the same ones suffering most from overpopulation, it is hard to see how anyone who considers the latter the "gravest issue" facing mankind "short of nuclear war itself" could be unhappy about AIDS. Obviously, no one is going to admit this publicly – unless he is as stupid as Prince Philip, who said in 1988 that if he were reborn he would like to return as a deadly virus in order to help solve the population problem – but the logic, if unspeakable, is inescapable.

The logic has not escaped those who are directly affected, as Steven Thomas'

research showed. The *New York Times*, however, finds it "bizarre" that blacks think AIDS is a form of genocide ("AIDS and Black America," reprinted in the IHT, 5/13/92:6). According to the polls they quote, 35% of blacks think AIDS is a form of genocide, 10% believe it was created in a laboratory deliberately to infect blacks, and 20% think it might have been. This is "paranoia," says the NYT, based on "pernicious and dispiriting rumors" which "black leaders and public figures with high credibility like Magic Johnson could do much to discredit."

Dispiriting, yes, but why pernicious? Whom do they threaten? Who is the NYT protecting? The words "paranoia" and "rumor" presume that the rumors are unfounded, but what is the basis of this presumption? The only theories of the origin of AIDS that have proven to be unfounded, though they still circulate in the press, are the ones about green monkeys and isolated African villages. The NYT quotes a black health worker who testified to the National Commission on AIDS that "until it was proved otherwise she considered AIDS a man-made disease." This is not paranoia, but common sense. The best explanation for the known facts can be considered true until a better explanation comes along.

What are the facts? Here are five, as I see them:

1. No socially transmitted disease has ever appeared so suddenly and spread so rapidly as AIDS.

2. It is possible to create pathogenic viruses by genetic engineering. The crucial, and as yet unanswered, questions are: a) is it possible to create HIV this way now; b) if so, exactly when did this become possible; c) when did the first case of AIDS in fact appear?

3. Plausible scientific arguments have been made to support various theories of an artificial origin of AIDS, though these arguments have been suppressed in both the mainstream press and in scientific literature.

4. The Pentagon thought it possible and wanted to create an AIDS-like virus in 1969 and asked Congress for the money to do so (MacArthur's testimony before the House Subcommittee, July 9, 1969).

5. Neither the government nor the press nor the scientific community has made any effort to bring the above facts to the attention of the public, much less investigate their possible significance.

Given these facts, it demands a huge leap of faith not to suspect the worst. I don't recall anyone calling Anita Bryant and the clean-thinking crowd paranoid because it occurred to them that AIDS was God's scourge upon the wicked. Why is it paranoid to suspect human beings of genocide, but not to suspect God? Why blame God? God has never been convicted of persecuting or killing blacks, homosexuals, drug addicts or prostitutes. Human beings have. We have a rich historical record to demonstrate the horrors which man is quite able and willing to inflict on his fellow man. AIDS

could be another one.

It is not difficult to imagine that if our worst suspicions are correct, those responsible have convinced themselves that they are doing God's work. If one accepts the Malthusian premise, AIDS may appear to be the only feasible way to keep the world from becoming unliveable, which would make its inventor a hero! Is it not worth sacrificing a few billion lives to disease, if it means saving the human species as a whole and preserving the earth as a "liveable place"? Are these not exactly the same grandiose strategic terms, the same philosophy, that our rulers use to justify all the wars they force us to endure? The relative few must be sacrificed for the greater good. A few million to save South Vietnam, a few billion to save the world.

Of course, the catch is that the "relative few" are always the relatively poor and powerless. It is the underclass who are the grunts in the AIDS war, just as they were in Vietnam and in all wars. Naturally, a portion of the middle class, and perhaps even a tiny fraction of the upper class, get caught under the wheels too, but this is a numbers game. And the numbers speak for themselves. They tell us that in the industrialized countries, it is non-whites, homosexuals, drug addicts and prostitutes who are getting hit disproportionately by AIDS. The NYT says more than half the AIDS cases are non-whites (31% blacks, according to the MacNeil-Lehrer report quoted above), and more than half the cases in women and children are blacks. Given the rate of spread of the disease in Africa and Asia, the percentage of non-whites who will be killed worldwide is much higher.

This does not necessarily add up to genocide, to an artificial origin of the AIDS virus. It does add up to a lot of questions which, despite the *New York Times*, are neither "bizarre" nor "paranoid," and are not being asked.

The answers, as in the other cases we have discussed, may not be forthcoming, in our lifetime or ever, but if we do not ask the questions, we have no one to blame for the consequences but ourselves.

In the end, it is we who are the enemy.

ADDENDA

1. Correspondence with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

I wrote the foregoing in September 1991. A year later it occurred to me to ask Arthur Schlesinger, jr. what actually happened the night of April 16, 1961, at the presidential retreat at Glen Ora, since his account in *A Thousand Days* implies that he was there. I also took the opportunity to ask him about his reaction to Oliver Stone's *JFK*, which had come out in the meantime. Here is my letter and Schlesinger's reply, for what they are worth:

Sept. 22, 1992
Dear Professor Schlesinger,

I would be very grateful if you could answer a couple of questions for me concerning what you have written about the Bay of Pigs invasion and JFK's Vietnam withdrawal policy.

In *A Thousand Days*, you say that after a long telephone conversation with Rusk late Sunday afternoon (April 16, 1963), "the President directed that the strike [scheduled for dawn the next morning to accompany the invasion] be canceled" (p. 273). One might construe from your narrative that you were in JFK's presence at this time – were you? If so, it would be interesting to know what else you overheard the president say. If not, how do you know that this is what he said?

You say that "Bundy promptly passed on the word" to Cabell. According to the Taylor report (*Operation Zapata*), Bundy called Cabell at about 9:30 p.m. From late afternoon to 9:30 in the evening doesn't seem very "prompt" to me, especially if this was merely a matter of passing on a direct presidential order to Cabell via Rusk and Bundy. Despite what your and other accounts assume, I am wondering if there ever was such an order.

In addition to the time discrepancy, according to the Taylor report, Bundy did not tell Cabell that the president had canceled the strike. He told him "that the dawn airstrikes the following morning should not be launched until they could be conducted from a strip within the beachhead" (Memo. 1, para. 43). When the Taylor commission asked Bundy about this decision, instead of quoting Kennedy (or Rusk), as one would expect if he had been merely relaying an order, Bundy responded in a letter, obviously choosing his words carefully:

This is a matter which arises from a conversation with the President and the Secretary of State, and I do not believe I am the right man to comment on it" (*Operation Zapata*, p. 179).

"A matter which arises..." does not sound like a presidential order. Furthermore, Bundy certainly is the right man to comment, since – as you make clear – it was both Rusk and Bundy who first decided to cancel the strike, before the president did:

Rusk, after his talks with Stevenson, concluded that a second Nicaraguan strike would put the United States in an untenable position internationally and that no further strikes should be launched until the planes could fly (or appear to fly) from the beachhead. Bundy agreed, and they called the President at Glen Oar (p. 273).

Since you say "they" called him, Bundy must have heard what JFK said, so there should have been no reason for him to hedge in response to the Taylor committee's question.

It seems clear to me that the cancellation was Rusk's and Bundy's decision, and they talked JFK into agreeing, or perhaps into letting them handle it themselves (which would explain the 4-5 hours between talking with the president and informing Cabell).

I'd like to know what you think of this conclusion, and, if you disagree, what the direct evidence is that JFK explicitly canceled the strikes after approving them (along with the rest of the plan) at noon on Sunday.

If you're interested, my more general thesis is that the CIA purposely sabotaged the invasion. The basis for this is a close reading of *Operation Zapata*, which shows the following pattern:

1) The crucial D-Day dawn strikes were cancelled, supposedly by the president, without the CIA attempting to consult the president directly.

2) The same strikes were made on D-Day evening, when it was too late, without consulting the president.

3) The crucial D+2 ammunition resupply convoy was stopped, without consulting the president.

4) The resupply was attempted by air on D+2, when it was too late to be effective, this time consulting the president.

I believe this shows a pattern of contradictory behavior on the part of the CIA leadership (Cabell and Bissell) that cannot be reasonably explained unless one assumes the CIA's real purpose was to force JFK into precisely the position that he found himself in – namely, of either fully committing US troops or facing disaster. As we know, he chose disaster. I see this as exactly parallel with the situation in November 1963. Withdrawal from Vietnam was considered a disastrous alternative by both the CIA and the military, but again JFK chose disaster, and paid for that decision with his life.

My second question concerns your Jan. 10, 1992 article in the *Wall Street Journal*. You say that Johnson's NSAM 273 called "for the maintenance of American military programs in Vietnam 'at levels as high' as before – reversing the Kennedy withdrawal policy." Can I assume you now agree, then, with Peter Scott that paragraph 2 of NSAM 273, pledging to maintain the withdrawal plan announced by JFK on Oct. 2, is a lie?

You do not mention in this article the recently revealed Bundy draft of NSAM 273. Some have suggested that since this draft was written on Nov. 21 it reflects the views of Kennedy. Since the draft and the final version signed by Johnson are virtually identical, if your reading of the document is correct, we must then assume that Kennedy reversed his own withdrawal policy in Bundy's Nov. 21 draft. Do you think this is a fair assumption? Is there any other "evidence" that JFK changed his mind about withdrawal between Oct. 11 (NSAM 263) and Nov. 22? There are conflicting reports of what happened at the conference in Honolulu on Nov. 20, but I know of no evidence that anything there changed JFK's mind, or his policy.

Finally, I would like to know why you think the conspiracy theory in *JFK* is "reckless, paranoid, really despicable fantasy, reminiscent of the wilder accusations of Joe McCarthy." "Reckless" because the truth is sought? "Paranoid" because it suggests that the government is our enemy? "Despicable" because the truth is despicable? "Fantasy" because Stone got his facts wrong – if so, which ones? (I'm

sure you have seen the excellent and extraordinary documentation in *JFK: The Book of the Film*.) Why do you depict Stone as a fascist Commie-hunter like McCarthy, when he is suggesting just the opposite – that a fascist capitalist conspiracy overthrew our government in 1963?

I did not intend this to be polemical, but you might as well know my opinion. If I were not open to changing it, I would not be writing to you. I would like very much to know your opinion on these matters, and will be grateful for a reply.
Sincerely,
Michael Morrissey

Schlesinger replied (October 19, 1992) that he was "too busy at the moment to refresh my memories of Bay of Pigs details." Nevertheless, he was "sure that the cancellation of the airstrike is much overrated as a factor in the outcome." He explained:

> Castro had dispersed his planes after the first strike. Cancelling the later strike made no great difference; there would still have been a tiny invading force facing 200,000 or so of Castro's troops and militia. Success required either defections from Castro's army and uprising behind the lines or a US invasion force. I agree with you that Dulles probably counted on direct US intervention when the invasion faltered; but I don't think for a moment that the CIA people purposely sabotaged the invasion.

In other words, Schlesinger agrees that Dulles secretly not only wished for but *counted on* JFK doing precisely the thing that he had told everyone he would *not* do: send in the troops. It would make perfect sense, then, to make sure the invasion failed, in order to force Kennedy's hand, but Schlesinger's faith in the CIA's moral probity excludes the possibility of sabotage!

It is difficult to believe a man like Schlesinger could be so naive. His response here, though, parallels his reaction to the Stone film (cf. Chap. 2), where he admits that Johnson reversed JFK's withdrawal policy but cannot imagine that this could have a relationship to the assassination.

2. An Open Letter to John Newman

I wrote this to John Newman, the author of JFK and Vietnam, shortly after the Coalition on Political Assassinations conference in October 1994, at which we both made presentations.

c/o COPA, PO Box 772, Ben Franklin Station, Wash. DC 20044, USA
Oct. 20, 1994
Dear John,

I sent a letter a couple of days ago to John Judge and Gary Aguilar (but intended for all members of the governing board) urging the creation of an electronic network (mailing list) whereby we could continue the public discussion that began at the conference. Until we have such a mechanism, I'm sending this by snail mail to a few people who might be interested (and whose addresses I happen to have), and of course I'm hoping there will be some feedback. An e-mailing list will make this kind of exchange much simpler – and cheaper.

This will be a bit confrontational, but I hope you will understand that I don't mean it personally or disrespectfully. The first question concerns your intelligence

background. Can you say anything to make those of us who suspect high-level government complicity in the assassinations (about half the general population, in fact) less suspicious of someone like yourself, who after spending 20 years in military intelligence now purports to lead the fight for "full disclosure"? As a former intelligence officer, are you not still bound by secrecy oaths that would prevent you from revealing or publishing material that some intelligence agency or other deems damaging to "national security"? If you do not do so now, if you overstep the bounds can you not be forced to submit everything you write and say for clearance by intelligence officials? Is it not logical to suspect that a former intelligence officer might still be working for the government? Would it not be ideal for the government to have one of its own leading an assault on government secrecy, so that this assault could be steered in less harmful directions than might otherwise be the case? Is it not also possible that a 20-year intelligence veteran might be more easily convinced than others that playing such a role is fully compatible with notions of "patriotic service"?

I'll give you an example of the kind of remark that does *not* allay these suspicions. You said during your talk on Oswald's 201 file something to the effect that at the end of this investigation we might find "not an institutional conspiracy, but perhaps a conspiracy on the part of some elements within the Agency." Why do you think so? What makes you think a crime and cover-up as massive as the JFK assassination is more likely to have been carried out by a few individuals rather than by an institution such as the CIA? To me, this "renegade CIA" theory is as implausible as the Lone Nut theory – just one more propaganda model or phase of the cover-up. Peter Scott's phase analysis (*Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, Berkeley: Univ. of Calif., 1993, p. 38) can be extended as follows:

Phase 1: The KGB (or Castro) did it.

Phase 2: Oswald did it.

Phase 3: The Mafia (+ anti-Castro Cubans) did it.

Phase 4: Renegade CIA agents (+ Mafia + Cubans) did it.

Phase 5: The CIA (+ their allies in the rest of the government and society at large) did it.

The government and the mass media now seem to be somewhere between Phase 2 and Phase 3. Phase 4 is waiting in the wings, and it seems from your remark that you expect its entrance soon, perhaps as the result of your own work.

Phase 5, which in my opinion is the truth, will be further postponed until enough time has passed that the future government will be able to plausibly dissociate itself from the powers-that-were in 1963. There are signs already that the CIA as an institution may be on the way out, and if that happens it will make Phase 5 easier to introduce. The public will be all too readily convinced that bygones are bygones and that their current government and institutions have nothing to do with those that presided over the coup d'état in 1963.

But we would do well to remember the words of Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, one of the first directors of the CIA, who told the investigative committee appointed by Kennedy to investigate the Bay of Pigs operation:

When you are at war, Cold War if you like, you must have an amoral agency

which can operate secretly and which does not have to give press conferences...I think that so much publicity has been given to CIA that the covert work might have to be put under another roof...It's time we take the bucket of slop and put another cover over it (*Operation Zapata*, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1981, pp. 276-277).

So they were considering putting the shit bucket elsewhere already in 1961. Who knows where it was in 1963, or where it is now, or how many buckets there are? This is why the term "CIA" should be taken as a metaphor for the larger secret criminal networks of power that pervade not only the government but also private enterprise. But you have to start somewhere, and since at least according to the overt structure of the government the CIA is the *central* shit bucket, that seems the best place to start.

The CIA is, after all, an *institutionalized* conspiracy. The Directorate of Operations (formerly "Plans") is by any reasonable definition the Department of Conspiracy ("two or more people planning secretly to do bad or illegal things"). It is part of an institution in the executive branch of the government, which makes both the CIA and the government, to some extent, institutionalized conspiracies. As are all governments, for what governments do not secretly plan to do bad or illegal things at some time or other? So much for the false and counterproductive distinction between "structural" or "institutional" analysis vs. "conspiracy" theory (e.g., Michael Albert, *Z* magazine), as Michael Parenti eloquently pointed out at the conference. So much, too, or so one would hope, for your apparent willingness to exonerate an institution which is by definition conspiratorial, while looking for "renegades" within that institution.

To put it a little differently, do you really think that "renegades" within the CIA could have pulled off the public execution of the president and controlled the official investigations and press coverage forever after? To modify that a bit, do you think "renegades" could have done it and then been protected forever after by government officials, institutions, and virtually the entire "free press" – merely because all these people made individual decisions to cover their asses concerning some aspect of the matter they inadvertently participated in?

To see how much this strains the credulity of any but the Truest Believers in the purity and goodness of the US government, try substituting "KGB" for "CIA." Does it sound reasonable to suspect "renegade" KGB agents of pulling off the assassination and the cover-up, and at the same time to exonerate the KGB as an institution, and the Soviet government as a whole? If there was indeed evidence of KGB involvement, do you think for a minute that any American would stop to make this distinction between "renegade KGB," "KGB," and "the Soviet government"? Certainly not. And why not? Because the Soviets are (were) the enemy. It is nothing more than our naive belief that *our* government cannot possibly be our enemy that allows us to rationalize in this way. Eliminate the initial premise ("Uncle Sam is a good guy") and the "renegade CIA" theory appears – correctly – as naive and preposterous as the "renegade KGB" theory.

Perhaps you do not realize just how deeply suspicious many of us have become of our government. That 81% figure that Dan Alcorn cited of people who "mistrust" the government hardly scratches the surface, in my opinion. (Furthermore, I don't think this is necessarily an unhealthy state of affairs: are we not *supposed* to mistrust government? That is what Thoreau teaches us, at least, and history too.) We, especially a group such as the one assembled in COPA, are so accustomed to the "string 'em along and jerk 'em around" strategy of the US government that we have learned to think in ways that government propagandists

eagerly dismiss as "paranoid," but which we know are quite realistic.

Let me give you an example of such a scenario – "paranoid" by mass media standards but not far-fetched at all to me – where you, willy nilly, fit in quite neatly. Time Warner, the biggest propaganda machine in history, produced the Stone film (*JFK*). This is in itself a wonder, since I think *JFK* can safely be called the most *potentially* revolutionary film ever made, although Time Warner can hardly be assumed to be in the business of fomenting revolution. They also published your book (*JFK and Vietnam*, NY: Warner Books, 1992), which is supposedly the basis of the main thesis of the film – that JFK was killed because he was threatening to withdraw from Vietnam. Then, in addition to the shallow but widespread (and no doubt orchestrated) media attack on the film, the most prestigious elements on the "radical left," led by Alexander Cockburn and Noam Chomsky, attacked both the film and your book by showing (I'm afraid correctly) that the only evidence for *your* thesis – that JFK secretly planned to withdraw regardless of the military situation – is anecdotal. Thus the end effect of your book was to provide a straw man – an extremely speculative thesis – which the most astute critics on the left (and I suppose elsewhere, but these are the ones I pay attention to) promptly demolished, and along with it the potential political impact of the film.

The point is that if this was a managed scenario, it could not have been more successful. The discussion of the (possible) connection between the assassination and the Vietnam War, which should have exploded in the American public consciousness like a nuclear bomb, was over before it began. It has now devolved to an academic historical question between those who believe you and those who believe Chomsky. Cui bono? Could it be that both you and Chomsky were cleverly (and hopefully unwittingly) seduced into playing your parts in this scenario?

The problem is that you, Chomsky, Peter Scott, and everyone else I've read have skipped over the one most important and undeniable fact in this matter: the *assessment of the military situation* in Vietnam changed radically – was reversed – *after* the assassination. Chomsky makes this point very clearly in *Rethinking Camelot* (Boston: South End, 1993, pp. 91-93), although he fails to recognize its importance. He is too busy trying to refute your thesis about JFK's secret intentions. This is the wrong debate. The documentary record is perfectly clear that JFK was planning to withdraw on the assumption (not "condition," as Chomsky insists) of success. The point of departure for reasonable debate should be: When did the optimism become pessimism (which in turn caused the reversal of the withdrawal policy)? Then the question and speculation as to whether this change was coincidental can begin. Instead, we have everyone discussing a quite different (and unanswerable) question: What were JFK's secret intentions and *would* he have withdrawn regardless of the military situation? And even this question jumps the gun. It should be: Would the intelligence consensus on the military situation have been reversed had JFK lived?

I agree with you and Peter Scott (and Schlesinger) that 273 reversed 263, and I also suspect that JFK could not have been stupid enough to think we were winning the war or that it was winnable, so my speculation about what he would have done is the same as yours. But as I said, this is not, or should not be, the issue. The issue is when the assumption of military success changed, and when the withdrawal policy changed accordingly. Chomsky is actually much clearer on these issues than you are, despite his thesis. He says the CIA and the other intelligence agencies began their radical and *retrospective* reassessment two days after the assassination. This should have raised the obvious question of why it took the CIA five months to realize they were losing the war instead of winning it, but Chomsky doesn't ask,

so we must assume he takes this as coincidence.

You, on the other hand, give a more muddled picture of the intelligence consensus at the time of the assassination. Despite the almost total lack of documentation regarding what happened at the Honolulu conference on Nov. 20, you seem to argue that the change from optimism to pessimism occurred on that day:

The upshot of the Honolulu meeting, then, was that the shocking deterioration of the war effort was presented in detail to those assembled, along with a plan to widen the war, while the 1,000-man withdrawal was turned into a meaningless paper drill (p. 435).

"Upshot" is a vague term. Do you mean immediately or within the following days or weeks? You say Lodge's assessment of the situation was "contradictory" and you gloss over his overall judgment that it was "hopeful" (p. 431), whereas FRUS is quite clear about this in a passage you do not quote:

Ambassador Lodge described the outlook for the immediate future of Vietnam as hopeful ... Finally, as regards all US programs – military, economic, psychological – we should continue to keep before us the goal of setting dates for phasing out US activities and turning them over to the Vietnamese; and these dates, too, should be looked at again in the light of the new political situation [after the assassination of Diem]. The date mentioned in the McNamara-Taylor statement of October 2 on US military withdrawal had – and is still having – a tonic effect ("Memorandum of Discussion at the Special Meeting on Vietnam, Honolulu," *Foreign Relations of the United States, Vietnam*, 1961-1963, Vol. 4, p. 608-610).

Thus your conclusions about the "upshot" of the Honolulu conference seem unwarranted and in fact misleading.

If we follow your lead, we have JFK secretly engineering withdrawal under the pretense of success, then seeing this pretense dropped on Nov. 20 (was this good or bad for his secret plan?), then presumably about to sign a draft of 273 which is, however, significantly different from the version LBJ signed. The problem with this is not just that it is all speculation, as Chomsky says. More importantly, it confuses the crucial question of when the intelligence consensus changed. If it changed on Nov. 20, as you imply, then we can speculate ad infinitum as to whether and when Bundy informed JFK, what JFK's reaction was, etc. Where does that leave us? With the minute differences in language between draft 273 and final 273 as the *only* hint of discontinuity between JFK and LBJ's Vietnam policy – a very weak argument indeed. Of course, none of this really matters, since there is no evidence that JFK had any idea what happened in Honolulu, much less changed his policy as a result, but it fuels the false debate.

It is far more important to establish and emphasize what Chomsky presents correctly but ignores, and what you seem to misrepresent: the fact that the intelligence assessment and the withdrawal policy both changed radically *after* Nov. 22. Chomsky would have to agree with this – if we could get him to stop playing word games with the phrase "withdrawal policy" – because he cites the documentary evidence for it himself. Once this fact is established, we can then engage in a more speculative debate about whether the assassination and the subsequent assessment/policy change were merely coincidental or not. I would like to hear your reprise on this.

Since COPA is putting a lot of faith into what I cynically call the "paper chase" (which I will help with if I can but have no faith in at all), I want to add a word of warning. Government documents are not sacred, any more than government autopsy photographs, X-rays, etc. are. We have every right and reason to doubt the

authenticity of government documents. For example, I doubt the authenticity of Bundy's draft of NSAM 273. It was declassified on January 31, 1991, by which time government agents were surely well aware of what Stone was up to. How very convenient that when the film came out in December, promulgating the explosive thesis (not new, but new to the general public) that 273 reversed 263, there was a draft of 273 to thoroughly confuse the issue: Did Bundy write it for Kennedy or for Johnson (i.e., was Bundy in on the coup)? Does draft 273 contradict 263, and if so does this mean JFK would have reversed his own withdrawal policy? Does draft 273 differ significantly from the final version? Apart from general obfuscation, the most obvious effect that the entrance of this document had on the discussion that the film engendered was to undermine Peter Scott's 1972 thesis of the discontinuity between 263 and 273 (e.g., for Chomsky, although he had never been convinced by Scott's argument anyway, despite having published it in Vol. 5 of the Gravel *Pentagon Papers*). After all, the government had had 19 years to think about how to handle Scott's disturbing theory, and what better time to release that draft than just before the film came out?

One last point. You may recall that when I talked to you briefly at the reception before the conference began, I asked you how you felt about Colby's endorsement of your book (jacket blurb). It seemed quite strange to me that the CIA's Chief of the Far East Division from 1962-67 should feel so positively about a book that, to me at least, implicated the CIA along with the rest of the military-industrial-intelligence complex in the murder of the president. You seemed surprised at my question, as if the CIA had nothing to do with Vietnam policy and therefore could not have been part of a coup intended to reverse the withdrawal plan. But it is well known that DCI John McCone was a superhawk on Vietnam before and after the assassination, and I hardly think Colby was any different, despite whatever he might say in his memoirs, which I will certainly not waste my time reading.

On re-reading your book, I can see why Colby was pleased with your treatment of him and the Agency. They emerge virtually unscathed. The brunt of your attack falls on MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) and the military brass. But isn't it accurate to say that MACV *was* the CIA, at least until the Marines landed in April 1965? On pp. 434-5, quoting Colby himself, you even imply that Colby was opposed to escalation in November 1963, and that after Honolulu "the military started the planning and activity that would escalate finally to full-scale air attacks" against the North, although Colby "never thought this would work."

I haven't heard even the most prostrate apologist for the CIA contend that there was anything but a hawkish consensus in the Agency for the war until 1965 at the earliest (cf. John Ranelagh, *The Agency*, NY: Touchstone, 1987, p. 417). Will you have us believing that Colby was arguing against escalation at the end of 1963?

I think most of us are aware of the CIA's Jekyll (Intelligence) and Hyde (Operations) tactics, whereby Hyde's covert maneuverings can be hidden and denied behind the relatively overt and supposedly well-intentioned face of Dr. Jekyll. This tactic is certainly used by the other intelligence "services" as well. And of course Dr. Jekyll says many different things, sometimes contradictory, and very likely the exact opposite of what Mr. Hyde is actually doing. Thus in reconstructing history, one can always choose among conflicting intelligence estimates and advice to argue that X or Y faction in the so-called "intelligence community," which of course includes the military, were the bad guys and the others the good guys. Your choice seems to be that CIA were the good guys and MACV, or specifically the military honchos (Harkins, Taylor, perhaps McNamara) were the bad guys.

This sounds very similar to the "renegade" theory of the assassination, this time

applied to the larger crime of Vietnam: it wasn't the CIA or "the intelligence community" or even "the military," but just a few "renegade" military honchos who pulled it all off. I can't buy into this, for the same reasons I've already discussed. And the CIA would be the *last* institution I would attempt to exonerate, not the first. The job of the *Central* Intelligence Agency, as I understand it, is to establish the consensus and present this to the President, who after all has to listen to somebody. So I find it ludicrous to assert that the CIA (as an institution, regardless of various stray voices within the institution) ever did anything but push as hard as it possibly could to promote the war in Vietnam (and Laos and Cambodia) – until Tet 1968, of course, when the consensus finally changed. As for Colby, it is even more ludicrous to take such a man at his word.

Furthermore, as I've said, according to Chomsky, whose scholarship I trust, even if I disagree with his conclusions, the source of the radically changed intelligence consensus after the assassination, which led to the reversal of the withdrawal policy, was specifically CIA.

So it's not all that hard, even 33 years after Gen. Smith's revealing comment, to know where the shit bucket is. Maybe Smith was being overly cautious. Maybe they figure there's no need to go to too much trouble hiding it, people are so used to the stench.

Sincerely,
Michael Morrissey

3. Reply from Michael Parenti

John Newman did not reply to my letter, but, surprisingly to me, Michael Parenti did.

An open letter to Michael Morrissey, with a copy to COPA, Washington DC
October 30, 1994
Dear Michael,

Thank you for your critique of John Newman's thesis. It sounds convincing to me but I will refrain from substantive comments because I haven't read Newman's book and have much difficulty stomaching Chomsky on this subject.

I just want to take issue with the suspicion you entertain that John might still be working for the powers that be. Such suspicions add nothing to your critique of his argument about renegades and they point us down a slippery road. One could play that game with you: What would serve the CIA more than to enlist someone as sharp as Morrissey to take out Newman, who is hated by his former military intelligence colleagues as a turncoat critic. It is odd that Morrissey – under what better guise than purporting to be totally critical of the CIA and the intelligence community – salvages Chomsky's research, and creates divisive feelings and suspicions by casting doubt not only on Newman's argument but his integrity and motives, etc. etc.

There is an infinite regress to that mode of ad hominem suspicion. I have heard that Mark Lane is an agent and that Chomsky is also working for the establishment under what better guise than acting as a high visibility critic of that very same establishment, etc. etc. Everyone is fair game. All it does is create hard feelings and divisions while adding nothing to the substance of the investigation and debate.

This does not mean that provacateurs cannot be dealt with. Of course, if someone is causing trouble for everyone, sabotaging our organizational efforts, casting a kooky light on things, and doing the other things that undercover pigs do,

then s/he should be publicly criticized. Even then, the question of whether s/he "is or isn't" and what motivates such a person is less relevant than the reality of what that individual is doing.

I met John Newman in Washington and liked him very much. I'm glad he's working my side of the street. I don't think it was a renegade netweork that bumped off Kennedy – though I once wondered about that. It is an argument worthy of respectful attention and of the kind of intelligent rebuttal you offered. I hope I will have the pleasure of meeting you next time.
Michael Parenti

4. My reply to Parenti

Nov. 5, 1994
Open Reply to Michael Parenti (10/30/94)
Copy to COPA
Dear Michael,

Thanks for your reply to my letter to Newman. I realize that exaggerated suspicions are counterproductive, but I don't think my questions to John are exaggerated or that they constitute an ad hominem attack. I would ask the same of anyone with an intelligence background. My questions in that regard are not rhetorical. I don't think people "retire" from intelligence work the way other people retire. The oaths they take are binding for life, and not trivial. Philip Agee, for example, the first CIA renegade, still has to submit to CIA censorship. For him to admit that (as he did to me), or for me to say it here, does not cast doubt on his "integrity and motives," as you imply my questions to Newman do. On the contrary, being open and honest about it speaks *for* one's integrity. Perhaps John will welcome the opportunity to clear the air. That is the spirit in which I challenged him.

Of course you are right that I (or you) could be similarly challenged, but the analogy is not very fair. I do not have an intelligence background. I did not predict that our investigations would not point to an institutional conspiracy on the part of the CIA, but rather (perhaps) to a conspiracy of certain rogue elements within that institution. I did not write a book that minimizes the CIA's role in promoting the war in Vietnam, presents William Colby as an early "critic" of US war policy, is highly praised by Colby on the cover jacket, and in my opinion muddles the crucial question of when the intelligence assessment of the situation in Vietnam actually changed.

On that last point, you say I could be accused of "salvaging Chomsky's research," but since you haven't read Newman's book I have to wonder how much you've really thought about this. I disagree strongly with Chomsky on the importance of the assassination(s), the (false) dichotomy of "conspiracy" vs. "structural" critique, and specifically on the Vietnam withdrawal issue, but the point I made to Newman was that Chomsky makes it clear that the intelligence assessment changed radically *after* the assassination. Newman's account implies that it changed *before* the assassination. This is a crucial difference, and if I find Chomsky's account here clearer and more convincing, it doesn't mean I buy his overall argument. On the contrary, I was trying to point out the irony of Chomsky clarifying the very fact that *contradicts* his own overall thesis of continuity in JFK's and LBJ's Vietnam policy – a fact whose significance Chomsky obviously refuses to see.

It might interest you to know that I tried, in the course of a long and intensive correspondence with Chomsky (before *Rethinking Camelot* came out), to get him to state his position as follows: JFK's withdrawal plan was reversed, after the assassination, because the assessment of the military situation was reversed (also after the assassination). This is in fact his position, but you will see that in his book, as in his letters to me, he refuses to put it this way because he is so determined to make the truly specious argument that "there was no withdrawal policy." The reason is obvious to me, and I told him so: Once you admit that there was a radical policy change immediately after the assassination (exactly when doesn't matter), you *must* deal with the question of the possible relation between the two events. (I said this in my COPA talk too, but I guess you missed it.) That means you are

automatically involved in "conspiracy theory," which is anathema to Chomsky (and others like Alexander Cockburn and the late I.F. Stone) for I suppose ideological or psychological reasons. The other alternative is to admit the withdrawal policy reversal but deny any relation to the assassination, as Arthur Schlesinger does. This is naive and irrational, as Schlesinger's hysterical condemnation of the Stone film amply demonstrates. Chomsky does not want to appear naive and irrational, so he has manufactured a tortuous and false argument that there was never a withdrawal policy ("without victory") in the first place.

Chomsky's argument is false because Newman's thesis (that JFK was secretly planning to withdraw regardless of the military situation) is 1) speculative, as Chomsky correctly says, and 2) unnecessary to establish the fact that the policy was reversed after the assassination, as Chomsky fails to realize. This is why I say it is a false debate – because it is about 1), not 2). The irony is that Chomsky's clear presentation of the facts regarding 2), as opposed to Newman's, *supports* a conspiracy view of the assassination. It is enough to say that two days after the assassination the CIA and other intelligence agencies began to reverse their assessment of the military situation – *retrospectively*, dating the deterioration from July – and hence to reverse the withdrawal policy. Chomsky says this (without using the term "withdrawal policy," which he refuses to use the way everyone else uses it) – not Newman. We do not need any secret intentions of JFK to pose the question of the relation between the assassination and Vietnam policy. All we need to do is establish what actually happened, according to the documentary record. What happened is that JFK was killed, and two days later the CIA et al. suddenly realized they had been losing the war for the past five months, and the appropriate policy change was made. This may have been pure coincidence (as Chomsky and Schlesinger both assume, Chomsky tacitly and Schlesinger explicitly), but once the facts are stated clearly, they reek of conspiracy.

A pity you could not hang around a little longer in Washington. I considered storming the podium after your fine speech and introducing myself, but you were surrounded. Next time I will. I did talk with John briefly, and I found him very pleasant and friendly. I wish we could have talked more, and I hope we will be able to another time. I'm surprised, frankly, that you take my letter as a personal attack on him, which it clearly is not. I am asking him about things that are "public domain," i.e., his acknowledged intelligence background and what he has publicly stated and written. Since these are fairly complicated issues, it is better to discuss them in writing and publicly, so that other people can participate. You are the first to reply in this mode, and I'm glad you did. I hope John also replies. I think such exchanges will lead to more solidarity, not less – unless, of course, it turns out that there is something seriously dividing us, in which case solidarity has no virtue anyway. That is what we need to find out. There is nothing to be gained by keeping mum and pretending to agree on things that in fact we've never even discussed.
Michael Morrissey

5. My Beef With Chomsky

I wrote this in September 2000. It can be taken as a summary of my correspondence with Noam Chomsky (1989-1995), the detailed discussion of which follows in Addendum 6.

Chomsky and AIDS

In my first letter to Chomsky, in April 1989, I included my review of the Turner film, *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* [see Addendum 7], which I had seen a few months earlier and had so turned my head around. He replied (5/15/89) that the review was "interesting" and that he "didn't know about the events" I described.

In retrospect, this is a puzzling remark. Three years later (3/3/92) he told me he had "read a good bit of the critical literature" (meaning critical of the Warren Report), so I suppose he did this reading in the meantime, the Gulf War notwithstanding.

I learned in 1995, however, after reading Ray Marcus's *Appendix B* (1995, self-published), that Chomsky had been well informed about the evidence of high-level conspiracy in the assassination twenty years before I wrote to him. Marcus tells the story of trying to enlist the support of a number of progressive intellectuals in reopening the JFK case in 1969:

> I first met with Noam Chomsky. Soon after our discussions began, he asked his secretary to cancel his remaining appointments for the day. The scheduled one-hour meeting stretched to 3-4 hours. Chomsky showed great interest in the material. We mutually agreed to a follow-up session later in the week. Then I met with Gar Alperovitz [a professor at Harvard]. At the end of our one-hour meeting, he said he would take an active part in the effort if Chomsky would lead it...
>
> [The second meeting] again lasted much of an afternoon. The discussion ranged beyond evidentiary items to other aspects of the case. I told Chomsky of Alperovitz' offer to assist him if he decided to lead an effort to reopen. After the meeting, as they drove me back to my apartment, Bromberger [another MIT professor who had attended the meeting] expressed the view that, "If they are strong enough to kill the president, and strong enough to cover it up, then they are too strong to confront directly...if they feel sufficiently threatened., they may move to open totalitarian" ("they" was not further defined).
>
> As we have seen from previous reactions by I.F. Stone, A.L. Wirin, and Carey McWilliams, this was similar to the fears expressed or implied by many leftist intellectuals among those who nevertheless professed faith in the Warren Report. From Bromberger, I was hearing it for the first time from someone who believed the report to be false.
>
> I phoned Vince Salandria, of whom I had spoken to Chomsky, and asked him to send Chomsky his research and thinking. Salandria told me he was skeptical that Chomsky would actually get involved, based on his previous experiences with such left-oriented people. He reasoned that had they entertained any such intentions, they would have acted on them long before this. Nevertheless, he agreed to send the material.
>
> Upon returning to Los Angeles, I wrote a lengthy letter to Chomsky summing up my overview of the case to that time, and stating as cogently as I could the arguments for his active involvement. He responded on April 18, 1969:
>
> > Just a quick note. I got your long letter, and some material from Salandria. I'll read both carefully. But I won't be able to decide anything until I return from England, in mid-June. Right now things are simply too rushed, and I'm too harassed to give serious thought to anything. I'll be in touch with you then. I don't know what the odds are. I'm still open-minded (and I hope will remain so).

> From the context of our previous meetings it was clear that what Chomsky "...won't be able to decide" until he returned from England was not the question of whether or not there was a conspiracy – that he had given every indication of having already decided in the affirmative – but whether or not he wished to participate actively, even to assume a leading role, in the movement to reopen the case.
>
> I never heard from him again, and Chomsky did not join such a movement. On the contrary, in recent years he has on a number of occasions gone on record attacking the critics' position and supporting the Warren Report (pp. 67-68).

What "events" had I described in my little review that Chomsky "didn't know about," after being informed by Marcus and Salandria twenty years earlier?

There is a telling parallel to this behavior in Chomsky's reaction to the AIDS origin issue.

In late summer 1989, I sent Chomsky an early (1986) paper by Segal in English and a copy of his first book, *Aids: Erreger aus dem Genlabor* ("AIDS: Virus from the Pentagon," Berlin: Simon und Leutner, 1987), which, though in German, I thought he would be able to read. (After all, I had to pass a German reading exam to qualify for my Ph.D. in linguistics, and he is the most famous linguist in the world!) He thanked me (8/26/89) for "the surprising and very interesting material," without further comment.

I had "surprised" him with the "very interesting" argument that the Pentagon had created AIDS, and this was all he had to say? It was my turn to be surprised. On Sept. 14, 1989 I sent him a copy of an article I had written summarizing Segal's theory ("Is AIDS Man-Made?"). He thanked me (9/22/89) for the "information," which he said was "most intriguing," but again had no further comment.

On Nov. 29, 1989, I sent Chomsky a photocopy of the MacArthur testimony from the Congressional Record (see "Informing the Press" in Chapter 4). He replied (12/28/89):

> Thanks also for the material from the Hearings. Sends a chill up the spine. This is very far from my field, and I have no scientific judgment. But it is hard for me to believe that one can't obtain a scientific judgment from some knowledgeable and unprejudiced source. I don't know people directly involved in AIDS research, but there are plenty of them around.

A year later, on Nov. 30, 1990, I sent him another article about Segal, focussing on the MacArthur testimony (see Ch. 4.1). Chomsky's reply (12/17/90) was: "Quite a story." These were his last words on the subject to me. A "chill up the spine," but the man who calls Washington the "terrorist capital of the world" has no more to say on the subject.

The parallel is clear. In 1969, he learns from Marcus and Salandria about the evidence for conspiracy in the assassination, but has not a word more to say about the subject until twenty years later, when I write to him, at which time he professes "surprise" to hear about it. In 1989, he also expresses surprise and horror at the idea that the "terrorist" US government may have created AIDS, but has nothing further to say on this subject either. This behavior strikes me as very much out of character – at least out of the character that I thought, from reading his books, that Chomsky

possessed.

There is another significant parallel. Chomsky's trust in the integrity and objectivity of the "scientific community" (in quotes because I think it is more like the Mafia than a community) is astonishing, and again totally out of character for a man who is considered by many to be the "leading intellectual dissident" in the country. In 1989 he assures me that "knowledgeable and unprejudiced" sources can answer the question of the origin of AIDS (although he obviously does not wish to pursue the question, despite a "chill up the spine"). A couple of years later, Chomsky reveals his absolute faith in the National Academy of Sciences. In dismissing the notion of conspiracy in the JFK assassination, he gives this example of conspiracy logic (July 1, 1992):

> Thus when the National Academy of Sciences refutes by careful experiment the one reason offered by the House Committee to question the Warren Report, we can simply conclude that the scientists are in on the conspiracy. Anyone who knows them personally knows that this is laughable...

It is hard to remember, reading this, that the author is Noam Chomsky, author of many books and articles excoriating other academics and journalists, not to mention politicians and government officials, for their conformist, propagandized mentality (e.g., *Manufacturing Consent*). But in these lines we learn not only that it is "laughable" to doubt the judgment of a member of the National Academy of Scientists, but also, implicitly, that the House Select Committee on Assassinations 1979 report is trustworthy.

No one who has read "a good bit of the literature" could maintain such faith in either of these institutions – even before Gaeton Fonzi's definitive exposé of the HSCA's thoroughly compromised "investigation" (*The Last Investigation*, NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1993). No one, at least, who is not either incredibly naive, or the worst example of the kind of propagandized intellectual that Chomsky has so often (and effectively and correctly) warned us about.

Chomsky and CAIB/CAQ

Chomsky suggested that I send my review of the Turner film *(The Men Who Killed Kennedy)* to *CovertAction Information Bulletin* (now *Quarterly*). This was the first I had heard of it. One of CAIB's editors, Bill Vornberger, answered on 10/25/89 that they could not print my review because they were planning to run a review of Jim Garrison's *On the Trail of the Assassins*, which had just come out, in their next issue. This review never appeared, and as far as I know CAIB/CAB has never published anything about the Kennedy assassination.

Thus the first obvious question: Why has a journal devoted to exposing the misdeeds of the CIA so conspicuously avoided the subject of the JFK assassination, when a large portion of the general public believes the CIA was involved, and especially since the journal's longtime editors, Bill Schaap and Ellen Ray, were also the editors at Sheridan Square Press, which published Garrison's book, and the editors of *Lies Of Our Times*, a political monthly (now defunct) that published favorable (and reasonable) reviews of the Stone film?

Chomsky has always been a supporter of CAIB/CAQ; his photo adorns the magazine's subscription inserts. "Quite a good rag," he told me (May 15, 1989). "I write for it a lot." Here again is a statement which in retrospect I find very puzzling. If I had bothered to check, I would have found that Chomsky had published only two articles in CAIB – actually only one, since the second one (No. 32, summer 1989) was simply a shortened version of the first (No. 26, summer 1986), and they were identically titled ("Libya in US Demonology").

Why did Schaap and Ray publish virtually the same article twice within three years? They had never done such a thing before, and they haven't since. Why would Chomsky refer to this one article, published twice, as "a lot"? How could he write for it "a lot," if it was only one article?

On May 21, 1992, referring to Alexander Cockburn's review of the Stone film in *The Nation*, Chomsky wrote to me:

> But so far, his account is the only one in print that does justice to the factual record. Perhaps I should abstain from comment on this, since I did a lot of the background research for it (though what he wrote is his way of using it).

I would like to know how many professors, especially famous professors, do "background research" for journalists. Chomsky is the only one I have ever heard of. Maybe this is the way to understand his remark about having written "a lot" for CAIB, although only one article had appeared under his name. If he does "background research" for Alexander Cockburn, why shouldn't he do it for others?

Although CAIB/CAQ has strictly avoided the assassination in print, Vornberger told me in the same letter that "we are very much aware of the fact that Kennedy was killed by members of a conspiracy." "In fact," Vornberger continued, "it is our opinion that these men were current or former employees of the CIA." Vornberger also said "we highly recommend" Jim Garrison's *On the Trail of the Assassins*. The question screaming at us here is: If that's what they think, why haven't they written about it?

CAIB/CAQ and AIDS

I also sent the AIDS material, which Chomsky found to be "quite a story," to *Lies Of Our Times*. Bill Schaap replied (12/27/90) that they had "real problems" with it (see Ch. 4.1). CAQ did not come out with an AIDS article until six years later, in their Fall 1996 (No. 58) issue. This article, "Tracking the Real Genocide," by David Gilbert, a prison inmate, hardly fulfilled Schaap's call for fair coverage of "alternative theories." Gilbert offers a two-sentence summary of Segal's theory, failing to mention that Segal claims the virus escaped by accident, thus making it appear that Segal blamed the Pentagon for spreading it on purpose, which he did not. This gross misrepresentation of Segal is especially surprising considering what Schaap had written to me six years earlier (12/27/90). But in 1996 Schaap allows Gilbert to get away with this blatant misrepresentation.

What "problems," one must ask, did the CAIB editors have with the Segal material? Why did they have no problems with the Gilbert article, which they must have known was a travesty? Gilbert not only misrepresents Segal but fails completely to mention other dissident AIDS researchers, notably Robert Strecker and Alan Cantwell. He dismisses the science of the matter by asking his microbiologist friend

Janet Stavnezer, who assured him that "the Segals' splice theory is scientifically impossible."

In the issue of CAQ following the Gilbert article (No. 59, Winter 1996), Nathaniel Lehrman writes in a letter to the editor that his 1987 article "Is AIDS Non-Infectious" (CAIB No. 28) "examined and demolished the Segal hypothesis of a synthetically created AIDS virus." This is truly astonishing. It will be clear to anyone who reads the earlier article that exactly the opposite is true. In that article, Lehrman suggests that HIV, although it is only "closely associated " with AIDS [following Duesberg], might be "a laboratory-created, minimally infective agent intended to be blamed for the chemical poisoning it actually accompanies."

Far from "demolishing" Segal, Lehrman affirms and goes considerably *beyond* it, suggesting that AIDS was not only man-made, but created *as a weapon*:

> The information described here, and the history of CBW research, suggest that AIDS may indeed be another example of a deliberately created disease (p. 62).

How is one to understand such self-contradictions? Schaap tells me in 1990 that his magazine wants to give decent coverage to "alternative" theories like Segal's, and six years later he publishes an article that does just the opposite. Gilbert gives us "official AIDS doctrine," as Lehrman puts it, grossly misrepresenting Segal, and Lehrman responds with an even grosser misrepresentation of what he himself had written in the same magazine nine years earlier!

One thing is clear: the message, flawed as it is, from CAIB/CAQ is that theories of the artificial origin of AIDS are not to be taken seriously.

Chomsky and Vietnam

Chomsky's argument is that

1. Vietnam policy did not change after the assassination (until 1968, of course)

2. Only tactics changed, quite coincidentally, at the same time as the assassination, in response to the changed military situation.

3. The change in tactics was first made by JFK, not LBJ.

The first argument is justified by Chomsky's definition of the word *policy* to mean "withdrawal if and only if victory is assured." This is his interpretation, from which he refuses to budge an inch, of one sentence in the McNamara-Taylor recommendations approved by NSAM 263:

> This action [troop withdrawals] should be explained in low key as an initial step in a long-term program to replace U.S. personnel with trained Vietnamese without impairment of the war effort.

Chomsky insists that the last six words constitute an "explicit condition" of victory before any withdrawal would take place, and that this was the policy of both JFK and

LBJ.

This is pure linguistics. Now, Chomsky is the greatest linguist in the world, but look at the linguistic facts he ignores in his interpretation:

First, the sentence can easily be understood to mean "This is the way we should explain it, but not necessarily the whole truth." Obviously, McNamara and Taylor (and JFK) would not have wanted it to look like they were simply abandoning the South Vietnamese.

More importantly, the phrase "without impairment of the war effort" is *not* an explicit condition, even if the most famous linguist in the world says it is. Consider:

> My plan is to wash the windows without hurting the plants.

Does this mean (Chomsky's interpretation):

> My plan is to wash the windows if and only if I can do so without hurting the plants.

Or does it mean, as I am quite certain it does,

> My plan is to wash the windows and not hurt the plants (and I think I can do so).

This is what the sentence means, and it is what McNamara and Taylor meant:

> The plan – at least the way we should explain the plan – is to withdraw and do so without impairment of the war effort (which as we have said should be taken over completely by the Vietnamese by the end of 1965).

But Chomsky wants us to understand it as:

> The plan is to withdraw if and only if victory is assured.

Who is right? You be the judge.

The second argument is meant to back up the first. If the policy never changed, it does not matter when the tactics changed, whether under JFK or LBJ, but we would still be left with the troublesome coincidence that the change in tactics (in fact a reversal, from withdrawal to escalation, from not fighting the war to fighting the war) took place immediately after the assassination.

But lo and behold, on Jan. 31, 1991, right out of the blue, apparently, a draft of NSAM 273 appears from the black box that houses "national security" secrets, with no explanation as to why it was being released 13 years after the final document was released (NSAM 273 was declassified in 1978), or who or what was causing it to be released (an interesting question in itself, as is the question of its authenticity).

This is all Chomsky needs for his third argument: If anyone should insist that even a reversal of tactics, if not of policy, so close on the heels of the murder of the head of state in charge of both the policy and the tactics, could be suspicious, thanks to the Bundy draft we now know that the person behind the change in tactics was not Johnson, but Kennedy.

Why? Because Bundy wrote the draft on Nov. 21, one day before the assassination! Therefore, Chomsky concludes, JFK would have signed it (although he never saw it or discussed it with Bundy or anyone else). Therefore, Chomsky further concludes, the people who say NSAM 273 shows a change in policy (Peter Dale Scott, John Newman, Arthur Schlesinger) are right, but wrong about who was responsible for it.

Chomsky's third argument actually contradicts the first. It's like saying, "I don't care what flavor it is, but make sure it's vanilla." If "tactical" changes don't matter, they don't matter. If they don't matter, there is no reason to make the further point – dubious in itself – that JFK made the change. By adding this third argument, Chomsky allows for the possibility that the "tactical" change was indeed significant, which destroys the premise expressed in the first argument.

What does all this mean? What is the message we are hearing from Chomsky and CAIB/CAQ? It is clear:

No AIDS conspiracy

No assassination conspiracy

No connection between Vietnam and the assassination

Surely it cannot escape our attention that this is precisely the same message we have been hearing from the government, from the mainstream press, and the so-called "scientific community." Nor should it escape our attention, as I think even this brief summary shows, that the argumentation presented to support these conclusions is patently false in each case.

Of course it is not necessarily wrong to agree with the government. But when "radical dissidents" agree so completely with the government, on such important questions, and the reasoning employed is so clearly wrong, the warning bells should sound. Ding dong.

6. Correspondence with Noam Chomsky (1989-1995)

In the first edition of Looking for the Enemy *(Kassel, 1993, 50 offset copies), I included one entire letter from Noam Chomsky, and some quotes from others of his letters, along with some of my replies. Chomsky, upon receiving the copy of the book that I sent him, objected strenuously to this, so I expunged this material from the version of the book I put on my website.*

On the other hand, Chomsky is widely considered one of the most important intellectual figures of our time, and our discussion was about matters of public interest. I consider it my duty, therefore, as well as my right to share this conversation with the public, to the extent that copyright law allows me to do so.

It is my every intention to report what Chomsky said clearly and accurately. I would far prefer to include his letters here verbatim, but since that is not legally possible I will just have to do my best. I will be happy to show the original letters to anyone who wishes to see them.

There was no one I respected and admired more than Noam Chomsky when I started writing to him in 1989. Being a linguist and a rather leftist veteran of the antiwar movement in the 60s, I had read a number of his books and articles in both politics and linguistics and felt a strong affinity with

him.

My (retrospective) comments are in italics.

26 May 1989

Dear Prof. Chomsky,

Thank you so much for writing. It was quite a thrill to get your letter, and to know that you found my review of interest is enormously satisfying.

In my first letter to him, in April 1989, I had included my review of the Turner film, The Men Who Killed Kennedy *(see Addendum 7), which I had seen a few months earlier and had so turned my head around. He replied (5/15/89) that the review was "interesting" and that he "didn't know about the events" I described.*

I've sent it off to *Covert Action*, which I am also glad to know about.

See Addendum 5.

I am very interested in your structural analysis of what I suppose we can call the capitalist ideology, particularly the role of the media, because it is the only way to explain how the forces of evil (for lack of a better term) work in a relatively free society. I am not paranoid by nature, but I am afraid the idea of conspiracy at the very top is plausible enough to be taken very seriously. It is quite plausible that these forces of evil are individuals powerful enough to make things happen on a grand scale with virtually no one knowing about it. The function of politics, from this point of view, is to obscure what is really going on. The Kennedy assassination seems the most obvious example of this.

Another possible example is AIDS. I don't know if this is being discussed in the States, but there has been some discussion here of the possibility that the virus originated in germ warfare research laboratories. Whether this is true or not, and whether it was accidental or not, remains to be seen (perhaps), but it does seem likely that the African monkey theory has been propagated mainly to divert attention from this at least equally plausible hypothesis. After all, these laboratories exist for the expressed purpose of developing just such viruses, and they would seem to be the most logical place to look first. I believe the monkey theory appeared around 1984, just about the time there apparently was some speculation about an artificial origin.

If people are moved to believe that AIDS is God's doing, it is certainly rational to suspect that it is rather the doing of certain people playing God. I do not find it inconceivable at all that human beings, given the means, might take it upon themselves to eradicate homosexuals and drug addicts, even if that also meant sacrificing a few "innocent" victims in addition. Hatred of communists and homosexuals also fits the ultra-conservative mind-set: they are all sinners. Few would doubt that Khomeini might be tempted to use a virus, if he had one, that would kill off large numbers of people he considers satanic. If the virus affected only or primarily blacks, like a more virulent form of sickle cell anemia, I suppose it would be even more suspicious.

I know this sounds (to most people) even crazier than the Kennedy conspiracy "theories" (though these, despite popular belief, are no longer theories but established fact), but who would have believed, in 1939, that in the next decade 6 million Jews would be exterminated? Prof. Jakob Segal, a biologist at Humboldt

University in East Berlin and to my knowledge the most qualified supporter of the artificial origin thesis, is also a survivor of Auschwitz, which perhaps gives him a more realistic view of how such things can happen.
Sincerely,
Michael Morrissey

Shortly after this, in late summer 1989, I sent Chomsky an early (1986) paper by Segal in English and a copy of his first book, Aids: Erreger aus dem Genlabor *(Berlin: Simon und Leutner, 1987), which, though in German, I thought he would be able to read. (After all, I had to pass a German reading exam to qualify for my Ph.D. in linguistics!)*

He thanked me (8/26/89) for "the surprising and very interesting material," without further comment. I had surprised him with the "very interesting" argument that the Pentagon had created AIDS, but this was all he had to say.

14 Sept. 1989
Dear Prof. Chomsky,

Thank you very much for your letter.

Prof. Segal gave a talk here a few days ago, and we had a little chat afterwards. He is an extremely alert, clear-thinking, and articulate 78. I told him I had sent you the material. If Gallo thinks he is a KGB agent, his opinion of Gallo is even worse: he calls him "ein ganz großer Ganster." For Segal, Gallo is not only responsible for creating the virus but also for the disinformation campaign afterwards, and even for deliberately falsifying evidence to get credit for having isolated it first (before Montagner). This seems illogical, if he created it in the first place, but I suppose money and megalomania would explain it. Segal told us a little story about a visit they got from the US embassy (CIA) in 1986: Frau Segal asked them if they didn't think Gallo was a Mafioso, and instead of reacting indignantly, they just said, "You know, there are millions of dollars involved in this." They invited Segal to Atlanta, but he didn't want to go anywhere on the invitation of the CIA. I told him, naively I guess, that even if he went at their expense he wouldn't have to say what they wanted him to, but he has a different idea about that. I asked him if he would go to the US if invited by someone other than the CIA, and he said he probably would, provided he could get a visa. Britain has apparently barred him, and France has made it difficult; the only western country he has been able to move freely in is West Germany.

I've sent the enclosed report to a few newspapers and magazines (including the *Boston Globe*, NYT, CAIB, etc.), without much hope of getting it published, but at least I'll feel I did something.
Sincerely,
Michael

The enclosed "report" was a short article I had written summarizing Segal's theory ("Is AIDS Man-Made," Sept. 1989; see Ch. 4.1). Of course it was never published.

Chomsky thanked me (9/22/89) for the "information" I had sent him, which he called "most intriguing," but again had no further comment.

29 Nov. 1989
Dear Noam,

I enclose another probably unpublishable review [*see Ch. 3.1*] – but I'll give it a try. On the off chance that someone might publish it, is it ok to use the quote from

your letter on p. 6? (I haven't sent it off yet.)

Enclosed also are the pages of the Hearings Segal refers to.

The 1969 MacArthur testimony. See Chapter 4.1.

The silence in general about AIDS, at least here, is deafening. Segal seems to be totally isolated, though he cites people who agree with him in private. Perhaps you won't mind if I ask you straight out what you think. Is it possible to find out if Segal is right or wrong?

Sincerely,
Michael

On 12/28/89 Chomsky thanked me for writing and sending the Lemann review, and wished me luck in getting it published. As for the MacArthur testimony, he said it "sends a chill up the spine." It was "very far from his field" and he had "no scientific judgment." "But," he added, "it is hard for me to believe that one can't obtain a scientific judgment from some knowledgeable and unprejudiced source." He didn't know anyone in AIDS research, he said, "but there are plenty of them around."

There was a hiatus in our correspondence at this point for about a year. In the meantime came the Gulf War build-up and war. We agreed completely on that.

I wrote again on Nov. 30, 1990, enclosing a letter to the editor of the local Kassel newspaper denouncing Bush's war plans (which was actually printed!) and another article (never published) about Segal and AIDS.

30 Nov. 1990

Dear Noam,

Enclosed is a letter that appeared in the local paper which I thought you might like to see, since we both believe that every little bit helps.

On the second front, AIDS is getting bigger and bigger and quieter and quieter. Segal is the Jim Garrison of AIDS. Fletcher Prouty has told a lot of people (including me) that MONGOOSE had the JFK contract and that Lansdale is the guy walking away in the "tramps" photo in Garrison's book (*On the Trail of the Assassins*). Segal, Garrison, Prouty – they're all crazy, of course. Me too.

Sincerely,
Michael

Chomsky thanked me (12/17/90) for my letter and AIDS article, commenting only that the latter was "quite a story." These were to be his last words on the subject to me.

I did hear from LOOT, but the response was puzzling and frustrating (see Ch. 4.1 and Addendum 5).

3 Jan. 1991

Dear Noam,

Thanks very much for your letter and the articles.

I fully agree that the Cold War is not over; only the terms of the propaganda have changed. The real war has always been between the Haves and Have Nots and will not change soon.

The current pas de deux between Hussein and Bush, threatening to crush thousands beneath their stinking feet, has already achieved the major aims of both:

pan-Arab leadership (of the people if not of the governments) for Hussein, a new credible threat for the US military, and higher oil prices for all.

The ideological fanaticism you speak of, quite evident among the government's media mouthpieces (less so, hopefully, in the general population), is as impressive as the passion of a used car salesman. This spectacle of King George the Wimp flouting the law of the land, not to mention common sense, while Congress and the press sit by and (mostly) applaud looks like a rerun of Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*. Fascism on low burn? Surely Hitler had no more "charisma" than Bush (or Reagan), and maybe that is the key: the Führer must be an empty shell in order to absorb all the contradictions, ignorance, and frustrations which have been engendered in the people, building up to the explosion.

The level of cynicism and hypocrisy and just plain lies is truly staggering. It does my heart good to see you lay into people like Moynihan.

If we confine morality to the propaganda department on both sides, it is clear that Hussein and Bush are both getting what they want, whether there is a war or not. Hussein clearly was encouraged to invade, and the excuse that this was April Glaspie's diplomatic mistake or that Hussein took more than was expected is simply ludicrous. Just as ludicrous as the idea propagated by the *Pentagon Papers* that US strategy in Vietnam (since 1965) was driven by a stupid Pentagon and stupid presidents, in defiance of the wise voice in the wilderness: CIA.

For example, John Ranelagh says in The Agency *(NY: Touchstone, rev. ed. 1987):*

> This is a perennial problem for the CIA: it does the work, provides the information and analysis, and watches helplessly as its intelligence falls on the deaf ears of policy makers. All too often what the CIA says is not absorbed until it is too late.
>
> This discrepancy between policy and intelligence became increasingly acute as the United States pledged itself to deeper and deeper involvement in Vietnam. As The Pentagon Papers – the official, top-secret history of the United States' role in Indochina – later showed, apart from the earlier period in 1963-64, the agency's analysis was consistently pessimistic about U.S. involvement in South Vietnam's war against communist guerrillas supported by North Vietnam. In spite of this, first President Kennedy and then President Johnson poured hundreds and then thousands of U.S. troops into the war, first as support for the South Vietnamese military forces and then as front-line units, as policy diverged from reality and as domestic political considerations were, naturally enough, placed before conditions in Vietnam. Ironically, this process began in the Kennedy White House among those who prided themselves on being realists and who insisted on quantifying everything before making policy decisions. The members of this group – including Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, and Rostow – stayed on after Kennedy died to fight the war under Johnson. In retrospect, their problem was that they often concentrated on details, losing sight of the big picture (pp. 417-18).

This propagates not only the myth of a competent and well intentioned, though sorely misunderstood, CIA, but also the myth of continuity in US Vietnam policy in the Kennedy-Johnson transition. This, as will soon see, became the main – and unresolvable – bone of contention between Chomsky and me.

A caller on C-Span the other day dared to say the obvious – that the main

beneficiaries of the Gulf crisis are the oil companies (and dependent industries). David Ignatius (*Wash. Post*) dismissed this straightforward observation as "conspiracy theorizing," which reminded me of Nicholas Lemann's crazy reaction to *Manufacturing Consent*.

Some (fortunately, a small minority) of the reactions to my letter to the local paper have forced me to see a further danger with espousing (or hinting at) conspiracy. Some of the people who agree with me, and not necessarily the least intelligent or least well informed ones, turn out to be neo- or unreconstructed Nazis! This is very depressing.

I think it is difficult to conceive of a conspiracy of the king, or of those in the shadow of the king, against his subjects. If the government is bad, it cannot be the government itself which is to blame, but something else which controls the government. A scapegoat is needed; hence the fascist leap – typically, of course, fastening on "the Jews," equated with Zionism.

The basic problem seems to be a deep psychological barrier to accepting the idea that the government itself is the enemy – whether "conspiratorial" or not. (If "they" – the government consisting of more than one person – are the enemy, they are by definition conspiratorial.) I suppose this should not be surprising, given the propaganda machine. On the other hand, at some level, the inherent evil of government is common knowledge, reflected in truisms like "All politicians are crooks," "Money rules the world," etc.

I am interested in this as a psychological problem because it seems essential. No matter how many facts are brought to bear, there seems to be an attitudinal or emotional bedrock that remains unmoved by rational arguments. Perhaps it is just the fear of radicalization, of marginalization, of no longer being or feeling part of the larger community.

What David Yallop says in *In God's Name* about the relationship between the Vatican and P2 strikes me as an excellent analogy for the relationship between the US government and the CIA (i.e. the "intelligence community"), and also for the relationship of individuals to the institutions they "believe in," whether it is the Catholic Church or the USA. Not everybody in the Vatican is a crook, but the degree of corruption (and conspiracy) is such that, rationally, one would think that even a devout Catholic would feel compelled to reject the institution. Yet, for the most part, they don't. Somehow, they accommodate the contradiction between doubt and belief, between reason and propaganda ("faith"), because they see no alternative. If Yallop is right, how can they continue being "good Catholics"?

The same is probably true of Americans' reaction to radical dissent, assassination theories, etc., all of which threaten to topple their fundamental belief in the goodness of their country, which they (wrongly) identify with the goodness of themselves, I suppose.

I have gotten an interesting reaction from some students in talking about the Segal thesis. I watch them trying to deal with it and try to get them to express what it is about it that troubles them (if it does at all – some are forever oblivious). A couple have said, "If this is true, I think I would commit suicide." This is a startling reaction, but an honest one, and I think (hope!) what they really mean is that they simply cannot conceive of a world where this is true, or where they believe it to be true, or even where they believe it *may* be true. Perhaps they would kill themselves only metaphorically, with a new self replacing the old – which doesn't sound so bad. Better than handing things over to the cockroaches, in any case, as you put it.

Sincerely,
Michael

Chomsky replied briefly on 5/20/91 and 12/12/91, expressing his discouragement at the American war fever and "anger relieved only by constant speaking and writing." We seemed to be in full agreement on that issue, which was keeping both of us busy, and I did not write again until a year later, after Oliver Stone's JFK *had appeared in German theaters. I wrote a review of it entitled "X, Y and JFK," and published it on my website (https://sites.google.com/site/michaeldavidmorrissey/essays/03).*

2 Feb. 1992
Dear Noam,

Enclosed is a review of the Stone film] and a comment on some recent *Newsweek* hype.

I know that Prouty has associated himself, indirectly at least, with Liberty Lobby (so has Mark Lane, who defended them against H.L. Hunt), which is unfortunate, given the (not entirely undeserved) "fascist" reputation of that organization. However, I think the media campaign against them has more to do with their opposition to the Bush-Reagan regime (Gulf War, October Surprise, etc.) than with their reputed racism and anti-Semitism. Much of what *The Spotlight* (Liberty Lobby's newspaper) says is right in line with LOOT etc., even if they do support David Duke. I think people like Prouty and Lane end up more or less in their camp simply because it gives them a forum.

I suppose by saying a good word about Prouty, then, I'm taking a little risk, but what the heck. In the review I admit to "being" a "Thoreauvian conservative," the "conservative" part coming from you, i.e. in the true sense. I would have said "leftist Thoreauvian conservative," but don't think many people would make sense of that. "Anarchist" is another possibility, or as you said somewhere (in an interview, I think) "syndico-anarchist," but for most people the word evokes images of skinheads throwing Molotov cocktails.

JFK is getting more sensible reviews here (the worst one was in *Spiegel*) than what I've seen from the States. That is, the first paragraph or so will (predictably, as in the Gulf War) parrot the imported American Establishment line, but the rest often takes the film at least halfway seriously.

I don't think things like the assassinations and the origin of AIDS and the cover-up of the truth about them should be subordinated to a structural analysis – by which I mean the sort of thing you do so well – nor vice versa. They go hand in hand. One can say the capitalist system bred Vietnam which bred the assassination, but most people will understand more readily the other way around. I think it makes a big difference, given the natural inclination to move from the particular to the abstract.

With me, for example, despite opposing the war (Vietnam) and all that, I never really could believe the government was the enemy, and when I see how some of the "radicals" of the sixties have turned out, I don't think many of them really believed it either. That was the point of much confusion and some unhappiness. I don't want to be too dramatic about it, but the assassination thing freed me. *Der Groschen war gefallen*, as they say here. How often does that happen in a lifetime – once or twice (if you live long enough)?

Best regards,
Michael

Chomsky replied to this promptly (3/3/92) and at length. I had touched a nerve. This was the

beginning of our discussion of the withdrawal plan. In all this amounts to about 25 single-spaced pages on his part, much of which, if I were free to reproduce it here, would be familiar to readers of Rethinking Camelot. *When the book came out, I realized that Chomsky had been using me as a sounding board, and at at one point (7/1/92) he said I had helped him "clarify the issues to myself, as I hope will show up in what I'm writing about this." This was a rather backhanded compliment, though, since by then it was clear that our views were radically opposed.*

Yes, Chomsky said, he knew Cockburn and Hitchens, "very well." He had not seen the Stone film and did not intend to. He said he had read "a good bit" of the critical literature but had "no firm opinions" on the assassination and saw no "strong reason to believe that there was anything of political significance" in it, "though it is possible that there was."

"The question that does interest me," he said, "is JFK's actual policies." He had been over the documentary "very carefully, including the Newman book, which is a travesty." Despite his great respect for Peter Dale Scott, whose essay suggesting a post-assassination policy reversal Chomsky included in Volume 5 of the 1972 Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers, which he edited, he found Scott's argument "unpersuasive." Since then, he added, new evidence has left "little grounds for believing that there was a JFK-LBJ policy reversal."

There is no significant difference between NSAM 263 and 273, Chomsky said. JFK was fully committed to "victory" in Vietnam, that is, "battlefield success" and success "in imposing the rule of the terrorist client regime" the US had established in Saigon. Kennedy supported the coup against Diem, out of fear that he was planning a negotiated settlement "that would end the conflict without a US victory." Nevertheless, Kennedy approved (with NSAM 263) the McNamara-Taylor recommendations (for withdrawal) "on the 'optimistic' assumptions then prevailing."

Then, Chomsky said, after Diem was killed, the negative truth about the war began to get back to JFK, and "was presented at a high level for the first time at the Honolulu meeting." This resulted in McGeorge Bundy's draft of NSAM 273 (Nov. 21, 1963), whose differences from the final version (Nov. 26) are "trivial," despite Newman's argument to the contrary.

So whereas Newman argued for a significant change between the 273 draft, written for JFK, and the final version, written for LBJ, Chomsky was saying the difference is between 263 and the 273 draft. The Nov. 21 draft, Chomsky said, expressed the "essence of JFK's policy, but written after the factual assessment of the war had changed." In other words, if there is any significant difference between 263 and 273, it is attributable to Kennedy, not Johnson, because Bundy wrote the draft the day before Kennedy was shot.

Although it is possible that JFK would have followed a different path than LBJ, Chomsky said, there is little reason to think so. The best evidence for this thesis, he said, has been ignored: Douglas MacArthur's warnings against getting involved in a land war in Asia, by which Kennedy was "much influenced."

The anecdotal evidence that Kennedy told O'Donnell, Mansfield and Morse that he would withdraw from Vietnam, said Chomsky, lacks credibility, because "the JFK crowd" could be expected to "put the best spin" on anything concerning their icon. Moreover, even if he did tell them he would withdraw, he was more likely just telling them what they wanted to hear, "political animal" that he was.

There is little, Chomsky concludes, "that is convincing in the work that has attempted to show that JFK was changing course." Kennedy "was and remained a thug," and (among other things) escalated the war in Vietnam "from state terror to outright aggression."

March 19, 1992

Dear Noam,

Thanks very much for your last letter. I can't imagine how you find the time and energy to do all you do and also write letters to obscure admirers like me, but you said somewhere you work like a madman and I believe it. Anyway, you are truly a phenomenon and an inspiration.

Re Cockburn, if he's a friend of yours he can't be all bad, but to be honest I am even more suspicious of him now, after reading his reply to letters from Zachary Sklar, Michael Parenti and Peter Scott in *The Nation* (3/9/92), which is even worse than his original article. He argues unfairly. I'll spare you the details, but just to take one example, after finally being forced by Scott et al. to discuss NSAM 263 (not even mentioned in the original article), he only mentions the 1,000-man withdrawal, not the plan to pull out all the troops by the end of 1965. *Time* magazine did exactly the same thing (2/3/92, box "Was It a Plot to Keep the US in Vietnam?"). There are other examples that are similar to the way *Time* and *Newsweek* do their thing, which is propaganda.

It's not just that I disagree. I disagree with you too on this (the first time ever, I believe!), but I certainly do not have the feeling you are being dishonest. I hope I'm wrong abut Cockburn, and I probably am wrong to jump to conclusions, but it wasn't exactly reassuring to learn that he was living with Katherine Graham's daughter in 1979 when he was "asked," according to Deborah Davis (*Katherine the Great*), to attack Davis's book in the *Village Voice*. When I made the remark about his "strange bedfellows in the establishment," I didn't mean it literally, but it seems there's more truth in that than I thought.

Another blast, Davis says, came from David Ignatius of the *Washington Post*, and this name struck me too. As I think I wrote to you some time ago, I was impressed by a remark he made on C-Span in December 1990 when I happened to be watching. A caller said the primary reason we were defending Kuwait was economic and that the primary beneficiaries of the whole thing were everybody in the oil business except Iraq – a perfectly straightforward observation, and correct, in my opinion. Ignatius's response was that he didn't believe in conspiracy theories! I believe he also writes spy novels, which may indicate his true interests and loyalites.

Ok, that may be a little paranoid, but it is 1984 + 8, and the assassination, especially, does seem to bring out the smoke and mirrors, both inside and outside of people's minds. As you say in *Deterring Democracy*, it's unproductive to try to dig into people's minds to figure out why they say what they do or if they really believe it themselves or not. Still, one can't help wondering.

Now on to more substantive issues. I'm very glad to have your thoughts on this because I haven't seen anything in print you've done on it.

The political significance of the assassination is nil, of course, if the Warren Report is correct. If it is incorrect, as it seems to me the evidence overwhelmingly indicates, some version of the Garrison (coup d'état) theory *must* be correct, and the significance of that is clear. I say it must be correct because I see no possibility that anyone could have pulled off the cover-up without the complicity of the government and the press. Not pro- or anti-Castro Cubans nor Russians nor the Mafia nor "renegade" US intelligence agents. None of these groups could have faked the autopsy, manipulated the Warren Commission, sabotaged the House investigation, etc. and managed the press non-coverage for more than a quarter of a century. However that complicity operates – by "manufacturing consent," conscious conspiracy, or (more likely) a combination of the two, it is real.

What Garrison's theory does not explain, but your propaganda model does, is

the refusal or inability of the intelligentsia to take Garrison et al. seriously – a prime example of Orwell's problem and of education as the best form of propaganda in a "free" society.

The "propaganda model" is the one proposed in Manufacturing Consent. *It is not complicated: the interlocking and pyramid-like connections of ownership explain the media's subservience to government and big business. Orwell's problem, as Chomsky has expressed it, is "How is it that we know so little?" – as opposed to Plato's problem, which is "How is it that we know so much?"*

Why else would 99% of elite opinion be so vehemently against the Stone film, when half the US population thought Garrison might be right (i.e. that the CIA or military were involved) – even before they saw the film? I suspect the even higher percentage – 73% according to *Time* – of the public who believe the assassination was a conspiracy would correspond to a much smaller figure among mainstream journalists and academics (both left and right), if a poll were taken just of them.

According to a Time/*CNN poll taken just before the film was released, 73% of Americans thought the assassination was a conspiracy, and 68% of these (i.e. 49.6% of all Americans) said the CIA or the US military may have been involved (*Time*, Jan. 13, 1992, European ed., p. 40).*

Stone has at least informed the public and put the question on the table. How many people had even heard of NSAM 263 before the film? How many would have dared to talk about this "terrifying" hypothesis (and it *is* terrifying for most people, I think), even if they had heard of it? The film has at least made the subject discussable. I'm sure Time Warner is working a quite different agenda, counting on a burn-out effect (already apparent), but that is a different question.

Now the (putative) Vietnam connection. First I have to say that I haven't been able to get hold of Newman's book yet (one of the joys of living here – takes weeks and often months to get books), so I don't know what new evidence has come out, but I'll try to respond on the basis of what you say and the bits Cockburn refers to.

Taking it chronologically, Kennedy's public statements prior to October 1963, including the much-cited September TV interviews, are clearly subject to interpretation. Of course he was playing politics, since pulling out would be the unpopular course, both with the population in general and in his own administration. Rusk, McNamara, Johnson, Bundy, McCone of CIA – all the top people were against withdrawal. Cockburn and others have said the withdrawal plan was "political," as if Kennedy intended it to make him more popular, but how could it have? There was no political pressure for withdrawal, or at least less than there was for continued escalation.

The "McNamara-Taylor" report, according to Fletcher Prouty, doesn't represent McNamara's opinion at all. It wasn't written by either him or Taylor, but back at the Pentagon, strictly according to Kennedy's wishes. They flew it to Honolulu and handed to McNamara and Taylor there for them to give to JFK as "their" report when they arrived in Washington. McNamara's true opinion was expressed to Johnson as president the morning after the assassination (Scott, p. 224-225), though it was no secret before then.

Prouty also says, by the way, that although JFK was for the coup against Diem, he planned to have him and Nhu evacuated by air to Europe immediately afterward. They were actually on the plane when for some reason they returned to the presidential palace and were later murdered in an military vehicle. I know there

are different versions of this and I don't know where Prouty has his from, but by all accounts Kennedy was genuinely surprised when they were murdered. I don't mean to defend Kennedy here, but it looks to me like another CIA sabotage operation. CIA (and Rusk, Johnson, etc.) wanted to keep Diem, and when Kennedy insisted on his removal, they knew he would be blamed. Nixon later had Lucien Conein deliberately spread the word that JFK had been behind the murders (according to Jim Hougan, *Spooks*).

I see no reason to assume that Morse, Mansfield, Powers and O'Donnell lied about what Kennedy said to them privately, or that Kennedy lied to them. It makes sense – both the public dissembling and the private candor. Assuming, just for the sake of argument, that O'Donnell et al. are telling the truth, what else could Kennedy have done in the situation? He could not tell the world, "Ok, we failed, we're going home." Of course he was wrong to have us in Vietnam in the first place, but how could he admit it at that point? The only alternative was to declare the mission accomplished (not "victorious") and beat an orderly retreat, putting as good a face on the affair as possible: "We've done what we can, but it's their war."

The McNamara-Taylor report did not talk of "victory" (the word Cockburn repeatedly puts in their and JFK's mouth) but of "progress." It's "optimism" was in my opinion (and I gather in Newman's as well) a ploy under which to effect the pullout without it looking like complete abandonment of the South Vietnamese. Kennedy was also getting completely opposite reports from the field, i.e. pessimistic assessments, and the political situation was clearly bad – "deeply serious," as the White House statement said. Kennedy would have had to be a complete idiot to have thought the war was being "won" (in the sense that Johnson obviously wanted to win), but this is exactly what the "false optimism" argument implies. I know of no other cases where Kennedy, whatever else one might think of him, has been accused of being such a numbskull.

It is true that Kennedy's statements on Nov. 14 continue to present a belligerent front, but note that the first objective mentioned was "to bring Americans home," and none of these statements for public consumption can deny the overriding significance of the withdrawal plan implemented by NSAM 263. That was policy; the talk about "staying the course" was rhetoric. Again, what else could he have said?

All I know about the Honolulu meeting is what Scott says about it, based on references to it in the Pentagon Papers and the press at the time: the Accelerated Withdrawal Plan was confirmed. Are the documents related to that meeting still secret? What new information has been revealed to make you (or Newman) think Kennedy was not aware of the truth about the war before then?

I am skeptical of that Bundy draft of NSAM 273. You say he wrote it in Honolulu, Cockburn says the next day (Nov. 21) "back in Washington." I thought Bundy and virtually the entire Administration (except for JFK, LBJ, RFK and a couple of others) were still in Honolulu on the 22nd. The whereabouts of all these people at the critical moment is strange enough, but be that as it may, why would Bundy draft such an important document before he had even discussed the results of the Honolulu meeting with the president – especially if new information had been revealed there?

It is clearly foolish of Newman to try to find differences between that draft and 273, since they are almost identical. He should look at the big picture instead. We are talking about the possibility of a coup d'état. If it was a coup, it is even more likely that Bundy was in on it than Johnson, being No. 2 in the national security hierarchy (above the vice-president) – and this throughout the "transition." Of

course Bundy would claim that there was no policy change, that Kennedy would have signed the same NSAM that Johnson signed, continued the war the same way Johnson did, etc.

And of course Johnson had to claim that Kennedy's withdrawal policy would continue, as formulated in paragraph 2 of NSAM 273. This is indeed the heart of the story: if Kennedy was killed (among other reasons) because of his withdrawal decision, every effort would have been made to conceal the fact that the successor to the throne disagreed with and reversed that decision. How convenient to have documents drafted both the day before the murder and two days afterward, neither of which JFK ever saw, much less approved, but which he supposedly would have signed and which supposedly show that there was a seamless continuation of policy!

What does it really mean to say, as Cockburn and others do, "there was no change in policy"? It means that *both* JFK and LBJ wanted and planned and implemented a policy to withdraw all US troops from Vietnam by the end of 1965. This is NSAM 263, confirmed by paragraph 2 of 273. Why is it never said this way? Because the inescapable conclusion is that Johnson not only reversed JFK's policy, he also reversed his *own* policy. Saying "Johnson continued Kennedy's policy" sounds harmless enough, but if it is true it is only half the story. The other half is "...for a short time, then he reversed it." In other words, whether paragraph 2 of 273 is a lie or not, two things are incontrovertibly true:

1. Kennedy's plan was to withdraw all troops by the end of 1965.

2. Johnson reversed this policy.

Seen in this way, the differences between 263 and 273 are irrelevant. Whether Johnson reversed the (JFK's, or JFK's and LBJ's) withdrawal policy on Nov. 24 or a couple of weeks or months later, the fact remains that he reversed it.

The significant thing to me is that all the historians bend over backward to avoid acknowledging these facts, determined to make it appear that there was *no policy change, period*, which is patently false. Why?

Because there are three, not two, facts to consider – rather, to avoid considering:

1. Kennedy's plan was to withdraw all troops by the end of 1965.

2. Kennedy was murdered.

3. Johnson reversed this policy.

Once these facts are stated plainly – which is never done (except in the dissident assassination literature) – it is obvious why the historical engineers have struggled so long and hard to avoid doing so. The question then becomes inescapable: Is there a causal relationship between 1-3? Since the question is not permissible, 1 and 3 must be suppressed by all possible means. I've looked into this a bit and it is truly amazing what gyrations the "responsible" commentators go through to avoid making these simple and well-documented facts clear.

Questions are not proof, of course, but the point is that even the question must be avoided. It is not permissible, any more than it is permissible to ask, Is Washington the terrorist capital of the world?

Chomsky has said and written this on many occasions.

Maybe for publicity-starved kooks like Garrison and war-crazed vets like Stone, but not for responsible journalists and historians.

If we had "won" the war, à la Gulf, maybe the truth could have been allowed to emerge. Then one could conceivably argue that "victory" was so important that Kennedy's assassination was necessary for "national security" reasons. But as things turned out, this excuse is impossible. Theoretically, one could still say, "Well, we *thought* the Vietnam War was so important that JFK had to be sacrificed," but it wouldn't work. In reality, it is impossible to admit the truth about the assassination because it violates the necessary illusion that such things don't happen in the USA. The irony is that exactly the same excuse is acceptable, as long as the president's assassination is omitted: "Well, we *thought* the Vietnam War was so important that 58,000 Americans and a couple of million Vietnamese had to be sacrificed." That is a perfectly acceptable truth, violating no illusions, since it is quite normal for us to sacrifice our own lives and other worthless entities for the good of the State – but not the life of a president.

You say the best evidence that JFK intended to withdraw is that he respected MacArthur's advice not to get involved in a land war in Asia. But that was rather early, wasn't it? JFK's initial escalation shows that he had something in mind – probably exactly what happened up to 1963, not full-scale war but counterinsurgency along the lines his hero Taylor recommended, using indigenous cannon fodder and mercenaries (as in Laos), with direct US participation limited to CIA and special forces. This conforms to what he told O'Donnell – that he would never send draftees to Vietnam. But certainly the best evidence – proof, in fact – of his withdrawal intention is NSAM 263.

I do not share the "Camelot" illusions, though one cannot help but observe that JFK was the last president to have any charisma and independence of mind whatsoever – neither of which are desirable qualities of leadership in a national security state. He did stand up to the Mafia and the CIA, which doesn't necessarily make him any less of a thug or less dangerous, but in fact it made him more dangerous – to his handlers. He bucked the Joint Chiefs and the CIA at the Bay of Pigs by refusing to send in the Navy and the Marines, and there was similar pressure to attack the Russian ships during the missile crisis. He defied them again ("them"=the military-industrial-intelligence-complex) with the Vietnam withdrawal decision. It was the Bay of Pigs all over again.

My theory about the Bay of Pigs, which I have written up in some detail based on a close reading of *Operation Zapata* (the minutes of the Taylor investigation), is that the CIA sabotaged it themselves. (Sent this to CAIB along with some other stuff but they never even acknowledged.)

This article did appear, two years later, in an "assassination research" journal called The Fourth Decade *("The Bay of Pigs Revisited," see Ch. 1).*

The purpose was to put Kennedy in exactly the position he ended up in: send in the troops or face disaster. The scenario was repeated in Vietnam. The clandestine involvement had built up since at least 1954 and probably since 1945 (when Ho Chi Minh was still an ally), climaxing in the fall of 1963, when again it was: call it war or quits. Kennedy refused again, for the last time. These snafus don't occur

any more. In the Gulf War, it was not necessary to maneuver Bush, CIA's own, into position; it was only a matter of getting Congress into position, which was accomplished by Jan. 12: fight or be humiliated (after drawing a 500,000-man line in the sand and months of name-calling).

I have no inclination to defend Kennedy's record otherwise. He probably did what was expected of him on most occasions, but in that office you can't make too many mistakes. Witness Noriega, Saddam, etc., who also got out of line. Even Bush can make mistakes, like his hesitation about sending the troops into Iraq last April. Whatever the particularities were in that case, I doubt that it was a coincidence that Bush changed his mind the day after the *New York Times* published Gary Sick's October Surprise story (after ignoring the whole thing for years). In the end, JFK was a victim, just like the rest of us. He may have been a thug, but he was an inconvenient thug, and not enough of a thug for the people who really run the show. (I don't know who these people are but I'll bet McGeorge Bundy does.)

If others want to play up the significance of the test ban treaty, the rapprochement with Cuba and the Soviets, JFK's (albeit reluctant) commitment to civil rights, his opposition to Big Oil, the Federal Reserve, the Mafia, and the CIA, and so on, frankly I don't mind, because the arguments are going in the right direction. I doubt that any of those factors alone could have brought about the assassination and cover-up, but the war was bigger than all of them put together. It's interesting to note that the *JFK* reviews (Cockburn being an exception in this respect) do their best to obscure this point, usually burying the Vietnam thing in the middle of a paragraph in the middle of the article among all the "other possible" reasons. There are no headlines that read: "Was JFK Killed Because He Wanted to Withdraw from Vietnam?" But this is the main message of the film, as most people who see it will confirm. It's that impermissible question again: ok for the movies but not for the papers. Damage control.

To change the subject just a bit, I must mention Michael Albert's terrible essay in *Z* magazine (Jan. 1992) pitting Craig Hulet as an exemplar of "conspiracy theory" against you as one of "institutional" critique? I don't know anything about Hulet, but it's interesting that Cockburn mentions him too. I don't know Albert either, but this article is really a crock of do-do. *Time, Newsweek*, Cockburn, Albert – they all form a united front against "conspiracy." Albert at least allows for the existence of "progressive and left conspiracy theory," which I guess is the category I would fall into, but I reject this dichotomy. I see a continuum, from the particular to the abstract, conspiracies as particular manifestations of -isms.

Not only is it a false dichotomy, it plays right into the hands of the CIA and their ilk, who would like nothing better than to see all "conspiracy theorists" branded as fascists, which is the usual implication (Cockburn's too). Why mention Craig Hulet (whoever this guy is) or Lyndon LaRouche (who some people, like Ramsey Clark, don't think is quite as crazy as he's made out to be), and not Peter Scott? (Cockburn, to his credit, does deal with Scott – by misrepresenting him – but more as a "fantasizer" than a "conspiracist.") The notion that "conspiracists" are fascists or even extremists is disproved by the great majority of Americans who think the assassination was a conspiracy and are not fascists or even extremists – yet, though they may be driven to fascism if their common sense understanding of the conspiratorial nature of government continues to be refuted by elite opinion. According to my dictionary, "conspiracy" and "government" are practically synonyms, and ordinary people seem to understand that much more easily than the better-propagandized elite. What governments do not plan bad things in secret? I see no contradiction between Jim Garrison and Noam Chomsky. Why can't they

both be right?

The question is, why is what Scott calls "deep politics" and "parapolitics" (I guess to avoid saying "conspiracy theory") consistently "resisted by the establishment left (*The Nation*) in almost the same terms as the establishment center (the *Times*)"? Scott's answer is that the left writes out of "false despair," and, like the center, "out of false consciousness, to rationalize their disempowerment," but I don't see that that explains anything. (Garrison is more depressing than Cockburn, everybody rationalizes their disempowerment, and I have no idea what "false consciousness" is.) Cockburn's answer seems to be that if the conspiracists are right,

> Out the window goes any sensible analysis of institutions, economic trends and pressures, continuities in corporate and class interest and all the other elements constituting the open secrets and agendas of American capitalism (*Nation* 1/6-13/92:6)

which is so foolish I can't believe he means it. Why should Garrison, Scott et al. render Chomsky et al. (and Cockburn for that matter) invalid or superfluous? We don't need this confusion. Hasn't anybody thought of trying to consolidate the revolutionary (peaceful of course) elements in these supposedly disparate analyses rather than insisting on driving them farther apart than they really are? I see now why *Z Magazine* rejects my stuff; it violates the anti-conspiracy doctrine. But if that Albert article is their idea of "sensible analysis" I am unimpressed. Oh well, there's still the computer network (no editors!).

Best regards,

Michael

Chomsky replied (5/21/92) that we were "at a bit of an impasse about JFK." He said he had now been through all the "internal documentation," which "undermines the case almost entirely." He mentioned his "friend Peter Dale Scott, a fine scholar," again, and having "recently had a long discussion with Peter about this and what it came down to was his belief that some still classified material might support the theory." But, Chomsky added, "we simply have no reason to believe it, and the evidence to the contrary is quite compelling."

The "theory" Chomsky was referring to is Scott's early theory, later elaborated by Newman, that there was a significant difference between JFK's NSAM 263 and LBJ's 273. But this Chomsky had already conceded, in his previous letter to me. The significant difference, he had said, was between 263 and the draft of 273, which was written by Bundy for JFK, and which was not significantly different from LBJ's 273. Newman, agreeing that the draft 273 was written for JFK, says it is significantly different from the 273 LBJ signed.

In the end, then, Chomsky was agreeing with Scott and Newman that 273 shows a policy change, but disagreeing with them that the change came with Johnson. Bundy's draft 273 proved that it came with Kennedy.

He went on to review "several types of evidence." The public record, he said, was clear, and everybody (including Scott and Newman) agreed that "JFK was, publicly, an extreme hawk, until the very end, holding that withdrawal without victory is unthinkable and would be a disaster." He did not want to withdraw because "he knew that escalation was highly unpopular, both among the public and in the Senate," and that therefore, if he had wanted to withdraw, he would have said so publicly because "he would have received enormous support." Instead, he kept "using his bully pulpit to drive the general public in a more hawkish direction, as much as he could." The record makes clear

"his unwillingness to withdraw without victory." If he had planned to withdraw, he "could have drawn on highly respected military authorities to back him up," such as MacArthur, Ridgeway, and Shoup.

The McNamara-Taylor report of Oct. 2, 1963, Chomsky said, concluded "that the military part of the war was going so well that if the 1964 battle plan succeeded, US forces could be withdrawn by the end of 1965." But all of this "was explicitly contingent on the success of the 1964 plan." By October 1963, JFK was concerned about the deteriorating political situation in Saigon and afraid that Diem and his brother Nhu would negotiate a settlement with the North, "which would lead to neutralization and force the US to withdraw." To this JFK was adamantly opposed, "because it would lead to withdrawal without victory." After the coup against Diem, negative facts about the progress of the war began to filter in, leading to the Honolulu meeting and the draft for NSAM 273, "adapted to the changing assessment."

If Kennedy had been planning to withdraw, "he surely had a great opportunity when the Diem family was negotiating with the North for a settlement." In that case his public utterances would have been different, there would be some trace in the internal record, and "he would have given prominence to the highest military brass who were strongly opposed to escalation, etc. None of this is the case."

Prouty, Chomsky said, is "utterly untrustworthy" and "a raving fascist," avoided by "serious journalists" such as Edward Epstein, "who does think there was an assassination conspiracy."

Oliver Stone had misinformed the public, spreading "fantasies about NSAM 263."
In sum, it was "pretty clear" to Chomsky "that no one with even a shred of rationality could have thought that getting rid of JFK had anything to do with the war in Vietnam." Maybe "right-wing nuts" thought so, but there was no evidence for it, just "belief and wish fulfillment." He lamented the "ugly name-calling and irrationality" that was causing "movement circles" to "tear themselves apart on this," when there were "so many important issues to address."

June 18, 1992
Dear Noam,

Your letter arrived in the same mail (May 25) as Newman's book, which I've now read. I don't like being at an impasse with you on this, if we are, so I want to try to pin down as precisely as possible what we are disagreeing about.

I do not have access now to the new internal documentation you and he mention, so I can't evaluate that. On the whole, Newman's "deception within a deception" theory isn't much different from what occurred to me – that withdrawal on the basis of "mission accomplished" (not the same as victory) was a ploy on JFK's part, in order to withdraw without losing face and the 64 election. I agree, though, that if we discount O'Donnell et al., this is speculation, and Newman doesn't add anything to what we already know (or don't know) about what Kennedy himself thought.

He does seem to make a good case that Harkins and Taylor (and, less clearly, McNamara) were lying (i.e. lying about winning so Kennedy wouldn't pull out). This is different from the standard *Bright Shining Lie* à la Neil Sheehan (also the *Pentagon Papers*' story), which says everybody at the top (except a few lower down the line like Vann), including Kennedy, actually believed they were winning.

I'm not convinced, though, that JFK could have or needed to have "deceived the deceivers." More plausible to me would be that Harkins, Taylor and McNamara were simply playing Kennedy's game – and probably reluctantly. If the top brass were really working against Kennedy, before the assassination, surely they could have thought up a more effective tactic to prevent withdrawal, such as staging a

Tonkin-like "act of war" on US troops. In the context of a coup theory, if the military advisors felt they had been sorely misused (by being forced by JFK to lie about the true military situation), this would have added to their sense of moral indignation and made it easier for them to support a coup.

The two basic questions Newman addresses are: 1) Were the top brass really optimistic, and 2) Was Kennedy really optimistic? The standard answer (the "false optimism" hypothesis) is yes to both (e.g. PP Gravel, Vol. 2, 160-200). Newman says no to both.

I'm willing to leave both questions in abeyance, since it's not likely that we'll learn much more about what anybody "really" thought.

Still, before I go on, I have to comment on the "false optimism" argument. What it really means is stupidity. The top brass and/or Kennedy were too dumb, naive, incompetent, indifferent, etc. – I'll just collapse this as "stupid" – to read the writing on the wall. We should note that this is the standard explanation for anything the US government does that threatens to be perceived as wrong. The whole war was a "tragic mistake," i.e. stupid. "Wise Men" and all, they were just too stupid to see what should have been obvious to any child – that US national security was never in danger in Vietnam, that it was an indigenous revolution, that the Saigon regime was hopelessly corrupt, that we shouldn't have been there, etc. Skipping up to the most recent war, we find the same explanations. Why did April Glaspie tell Saddam the US didn't care about his border disputes? Stupidity. Why didn't Bush at least try to get the foreigners out of Kuwait after the invasion, *before* sending in the troops (upon which Saddam took them hostage)? Stupidity. Why didn't they go on to take out Saddam Hussein? Stupidity. Why did they leave Saddam his helicopters and elite troops? Stupidity. Why did they get the Kurds to revolt and then abandon them? Stupidity.

No matter how skillfully the rhetoric may disguise it ("well-intentioned errors"), the "explanation" always boils down to plain old stupidity. (Well-intentioned stupidity is still stupidity.) I just don't buy it. I never thought I was smarter than McGeorge Bundy (to take my favorite hate-figure).

One alternative explanation is the propaganda model. I think it is valid and powerful, but it doesn't explain everything. For one thing, doesn't it too boil down to intellectual blindness and self-deception, and aren't those just fancy words for stupidity? Should I believe that McGeorge Bundy was so blind, propagandized, self-deceived – or stupid – that in 1963-64 he didn't know what I knew (at the age of 17-18), namely that Vietnam was (at least) a mistake?

The most obvious cases where the propaganda model fails are the assassinations. I suppose one might explain the execution of Fred Hampton (which you talked about in one of your books) in terms of the propaganda model, given the mindset of the Chicago police and the situation. But this will not do for JFK, RFK, and MLK – just to name the biggies. These were conspiracies, both the executions themselves and the subsequent cover-ups, and the evidence for high-level, long-term government complicity is overwhelming.

One could explain this complicity in terms of a propaganda model too, I suppose, i.e. if it was ultimately "well-intentioned." They did it for what they were convinced was the good of the country. But you could say the same about Hitler and anyone else. At this point, the notion of conspiracy disappears altogether, because the notion of right and wrong also disappears. If the "conspirators" are convinced that their goals are good and their means are justified, there is no conspiracy from their point of view. From our point of view, we can say they are (willing) victims of propaganda, but if we disagree with their idea of "good" we

have to call it conspiracy (a plan by more than one person to do something bad).

To return to the question at hand, let us assume no more than what the paper record tells us, omitting all speculation about what anyone really believed and when, omitting Scott's thesis (that NSAM 273 confirming the withdrawal plan was a lie), omitting Newman's thesis (that the top brass were lying and Kennedy was pretending to believe them to justify withdrawal). We can also omit the question of the conditionality of withdrawal on continued battlefield success. You say the condition was crucial and explicit, but in the McNamara-Taylor recommendations implemented by NSAM 263 it is only implied ("we should be able..."), unless I've missed an if-clause. In any case, the importance you attach to this depends again on what you think people actually believed. If nobody really believed that there was any success in the first place, as Newman says, the question is irrelevant.

PP Gravel 2, 160-200 tells us that the withdrawal plan started in the summer of 1962, began wavering in December 1963 (p. 191-192, 276), and ended by March 27, 1964, at the very latest:

> Thus ended de jure the policy of phase out and withdrawal and all the plans and programs oriented to it. Shortly, they would be cancelled out de facto (p. 196).

This means that withdrawal was still policy on Nov. 22, and it changed under Johnson. Johnson reversed Kennedy's withdrawal plan. This – no more, no less – is fact. Do you agree?

I think the problem may be that we are coming at this from different directions. I think you are more concerned with making sure that JFK is not remade into a dove. I am more concerned with getting at the truth about the assassination. I guess I was wrong to say last time that I didn't mind if Stone et al. fall into the Camelot syndrome, because if it leads people closer to the truth about the assassination it would be in the right direction. There is no reason to compromise there, even for "strategic" reasons. You're quite right, of course, JFK was a hawk. But there are hawks and hawks. Hawks can have withdrawal policies. Reagan withdrew from Lebanon. Bush withdrew from Iraq. Nixon finally withdrew from Vietnam.

You might say that sure, the whole history of the war was based on a phony "withdrawal policy," which is true in a sense, but I refer again to the Pentagon Papers account. The withdrawal policy that ended by March 1964 was real and had nothing to do with Nixon's "secret plan" to end the war and eventual retreat.

There doesn't *have* to be a connection between the assassination and the withdrawal policy reversal. It is a theory, but a good one. I would hardly presume to remind you, of all people, that there is a difference between good theories and bad ones. The theory that Hinkley shot Reagan because he thought Reagan was a closet Leninist is a bad one. It's bad because there is no evidence for it and it explains nothing.

There is plenty of evidence, however, that the assassination and cover-up was a government conspiracy, a coup d'état, without going into the Vietnam question. But if you add to all this the fact – which is all I am trying to establish here – that Johnson reversed Kennedy's withdrawal policy, you certainly have a basis to postulate that one reason for the assassination was to affect the policy change.

I think it would be more accurate to compare this theory with your propaganda model. It's not the fact that it can't be disproved that makes it a good theory. It's a good theory because it makes sense, explains more of the facts in a coherent way than other theories, etc.

That just about does it from my side for the essential point, but I'll go through your letter to make sure I've covered everything and in some cases to ask for information.

You say JFK knew that escalation was highly unpopular. What is the evidence for this? Certainly it was just the opposite among most of his own staff, and there must have been at least as many hawks as doves in Congress and in the population at large, inasmuch as anybody was even thinking seriously about it in 1963. (The first conversation I remember having about Vietnam was in the spring of 1963, when a friend asked me what I thought "we ought to do over there." All I could say then was "I don't know, what do you think?" but I was quite shocked when he said he thought we should "beat the shit out of 'em." I just thought, Why?)

I can't find any references in Newman to Shoup advising Kennedy to withdraw, or any at all to Ridgeway or MacArthur. I've read elsewhere that MacArthur advised JFK in 1961 never to get involved in a land war in Asia, but I didn't know either one advised him later on Vietnam.

What happened in Honolulu on Nov. 20 still seems a mystery, but I see no evidence whatsoever that the official withdrawal policy changed, whether the military reports had become more pessimistic or not. (Newman's argument is that the new pessimism only increased JFK's desire to withdraw, but let's ignore that.) The second paragraph of NSAM 273, both the Bundy draft and LBJ's version, confirms that the withdrawal policy was to continue.

If you consider the possibility of a coup d'état, the motives of people like Bundy, McNamara, etc., as well as Johnson, are highly suspect, to say the least, so there is no point in debating whether that Bundy draft was written "for Kennedy" or not. It doesn't matter.

I would feel like I am belaboring the obvious, except that it isn't. I mean, what should be obvious is not obvious at all to the people who should know. The standard accounts do not say what PP Gravel says quite clearly. They say the opposite. They say (like Cockburn) there was *no change of policy*, meaning the policy of *escalation*. What should be "obvious," however, and what the PP say, is that there was no change in the policy *of withdrawal* until after Kennedy's death. There's a big difference. Almost no one says that Johnson continued Kennedy's withdrawal policy, and then reversed it. They say Johnson continued Kennedy's policy of escalation.

Here are a few examples I've collected, quite at random…

Here I present the material in Ch. 1.3.

Thanks to accounts like those of Schlesinger and Karnow, the general public has not even been aware that there was a withdrawal policy, much less that Johnson reversed it – despite the clear account in PP Gravel. If the Stone film has informed people of this much, it has performed a public service.

You say JFK's most trusted advisers, after the military assessment changed, proceeded haltingly and ambiguously toward committing US combat troops.

"Taylor, for one," Chomsky had told me, "was dragging his feet on this well into 1965. The chiefs remained ambiguous. Shoup called publicly for withdrawal, in the strongest terms, in 1965, at a time when all the Kennedy folk were still extreme hawks" (5/21/92).

I don't see the point. Surely you don't mean to imply that the chiefs were doves.

(I would be interested to see that quote from Shoup, but in any case 1965 was not 1963). Do you mean that if they had been in on a coup, they would have sent the Marines in immediately? That would have been too obvious. There had to be some transition period, some pretext that the military situation had changed, before the big commitment was made. It didn't take long, and there was plenty of time, once Johnson was in the White House. They didn't need Goldwater.

Chomsky had referred to "the CIA, or whoever," who would have had far more reason to knock off LBJ in favor of a real alternative: Goldwater. LBJ "was more dovish than JFK had been a year earlier," and Goldwater was an extreme hawk, so the putative warmongers would have profited from getting rid of LBJ more than from JFK (5/21/92).

He [Goldwater] also would have been too obvious a change. The goal was to establish and perpetuate precisely the myth that endures today – that "there was no change in policy."

This is the whole point I am trying to make. Once this myth is shattered, one way or another, the question of a connection between the policy change and the assassination is inevitable.

I quite agree that the JFK-Vietnam issue is narrow, if you define it as whether US imperialism should take the form of counterinsurgency (JFK's preference) or full-scale war. But that, for me, is not the issue at all.

The issue is whether the government is so corrupt, so powerful, and so much in control of our minds that it can murder (even) the president and keep it secret for more than a quarter of a century. It's not a matter of Kennedy as a person; his life was worth no more or less than anyone else's. I guess I'm thinking "strategically" again, but if the assassination was a coup, it is the most dramatic and powerful demonstration of the illegitimacy of the government, of the structures of the government, of the necessity for radical change that I can imagine. If anything like ideas can be the stuff of revolution, this is one, and I simply do not understand how you can deny the political significance of it. Do you believe the Warren Report, or even give it the benefit of the doubt? If you do in this case, where there is so much evidence to the contrary, how can you doubt their word about anything?

Re Prouty (haven't heard from him in a while), if he turns out to be a raving fascist I'll be more than a little embarrassed. What makes you say so? Maybe I've been overly impressed with his "insider" account, but he seems sincere. He was wrong to associate himself with Liberty Lobby, and he's no scholar, and maybe a raving conspiracist, but why "fascist"? I'm surprised that you say "serious journalists dismiss him," since we both know how much that is worth.

I think Epstein is the one who thinks the KGB did it, which is why I haven't read him. The best books I know on the assassination are Garrison's *On the Trail of the Assassins*, Jim Marrs' *Crossfire*, and Groden and Livingstone's *High Treason*. Prouty has a book coming out in the fall, but I haven't seen it.

You ask what makes me assume that JFK knew more of the truth about the war than McNamara, Taylor, Bundy, Hilsman, etc. I didn't mean to imply that. After reading Newman, I believe Taylor and Harkins, at least, knew the truth, and lied. How much JFK knew about the true military situation, and when, what game he was playing, and whose side McNamara and Bundy, etc. were on, I suppose will go unanswered.

We do not need any of these answers, though, to make a rational connection between the assassination and the withdrawal policy reversal. It cannot be proved,

but it is the best theory of the assassination I have heard. If that – the desire for rational explanation – is wish-fulfillment, then it is wish-fulfillment.

I don't see what "right-wing nuts" have to do with it one way or another.

Chomsky had referred to "Philip Green in the last Nation*," who had suggested that "maybe right-wing nuts thought" JFK was going to abort their war. "Sure, maybe," Chomsky wrote. "On that 'theory' anything that happens gets an explanation: it was done by right-wing nuts, who may have thought... That's desperation, not political analysis" (5/21/92).*

Are you a right-wing nut if you "believe" (but cannot prove) that the CIA helped assassinate Allende, Lumumba, Trujillo, etc.?

The pro-war forces surrounding Kennedy were not "right-wing nuts," in the usual sense of the term. They were the Vice President, Bundy, McNamara, Rusk, McCone, the Joint Chiefs, etc. And, you will want to say, JFK too. But look at what we know. We know there was a withdrawal plan, and it was his plan. We cannot know if he would have carried it out, but we know that it was still his official policy on the day he was shot. What is irrational about suspecting that the pro-war forces would have assumed that he would do what he said he would do, that they feared he would do what he said he would do? Instead, we have a quasi-universal consensus that he would *not* have done what he said he was going to do. That is the point where the question of rationality, belief, and wish-fulfillment should be asked, in my opinion.

Kennedy was the only one of the bunch that we can say with certainty *did* support the withdrawal policy, because he was the one ultimately responsible for it. He is also the only one we can *not* say supported the policy *reversal*, because he was dead by the time it occurred.

Everything else is speculation. But the plain facts – the assassination and the policy reversal – suffice to support the hypothesis that Kennedy was killed in order to ensure that the withdrawal policy would be reversed and that the war, eventually worth $570 billion to the warmongers, would take place. The curious thing to me is how this not only rational but (one would think) obvious thesis has been suppressed in the mainstream. As I said last time, it strikes me as a perfect example of Orwell's problem.

I hope I've been able to hammer out some common ground, because frankly I'm surprised to find us (apparently) disagreeing on this. On the other hand, it confirms what I feel – that the assassination is the key to a lot of things, not only Vietnam. If it was just another US government-sponsored murder, I don't think we'd be talking about it at all.

With best regards,
Michael

In his reply of 7/1/92 Chomsky said he had finished about 100 pages of a manuscript (which I presume became Rethinking Camelot*) attacking the "Schlesinger-Newman-Stone (etc.)" thesis that JFk "had a secret plan to withdraw." It would be hard, he said, "to find a historical thesis more utterly refuted by the evidence."*

Rather than try to summarize this lengthy letter (10 pages, single-spaced), most of which is in Rethinking Camelot *anyway, I will refer to it in notes to my reply.*

Aug. 3, 1992
Dear Noam,

Your letter does help to clarify things, and I guess we've just about scraped bottom on this. Your position, at least, is clear, but I don't think I've made myself clear on a couple of points.

In sum, all I am saying, as far as "the record" goes, is what PP Gravel says: Johnson abandoned, i.e. reversed, the withdrawal policy by March 1964 (at the latest). You can say, as the PP also say, that policy changed because conditions and assumptions changed, but the fact remains that the policy changed, and it changed under Johnson, not Kennedy.

You say that the policy did not change, that it was "victory, then withdrawal" under both Kennedy and Johnson. I think this formulation skews the issue. This may be a question of what people call "semantics," but it is still important, since what the "facts" are always depends partly on how they are presented, and our discussion seems to be a good example of this.

What "withdrawal policy" are we talking about? I am talking about the one PP Gravel describes in 2:160-200. If you wish to say this policy did not change, you are using the term in a quite different way than the PP use it. The PP summary which I quoted, and which you say is accurate, says: "Thus ended [by March 27, 1964] de jure the *policy* of phase out and withdrawal and all the *plans* and *programs* oriented to it (2:196)." The first indication of this change came the day after the assassination: "The only hint that something might be different from on-going *plans* came in a Secretary of Defense memo for the President three days prior to this NSC meeting [on Nov. 26]." Johnson "began to have a sense of uneasiness about Vietnam" in early December and initiated a "major *policy* review (2:191; my emphasis)."

The PP also support your point that the withdrawal plan was conditional on military success, but I think it is more accurate to say that it was based on the *assumption* of success. I don't read the condition in the McNamara-Taylor recommendations as explicitly as you do.

The recommendations were (see Ch.1.1):

> *2. A program be established to train Vietnamese so that essential functions now performed by U.S. military personnel can be carried out by Vietnamese by the end of 1965. It should be possible to withdraw the bulk of U.S. personnel by that time.*
> *3. In accordance with the program to train progressively Vietnamese to take over military functions, the Defense Department should announce in the very near future presently prepared plans to withdraw 1000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963. This action should be explained in low key as an initial step in a long-term program to replace U.S. personnel with trained Vietnamese without impairment of the war effort (*Pentagon Papers*, NY: Bantam, 1971, pp. 211-212).*

It is the phrase "without impairment of the war effort" in this last sentence that Chomsky insists is the "explicit condition." I am trying to make the (simple, I thought) point that saying "My plan is to paint the living room without ruining the rug" is not the same as saying "If I can do it without ruining the rug, I will paint the living room." I was astounded by Chomsky's consistent refusal to acknowledge the point, since it is quite clear from a linguistic as well as common-sense point of view. McNamara and Taylor's recommendations were based on their conclusions, the first of which was:

1. The military campaign has made great progress and continues to progress. (p. 211).

There is a difference between saying "If we continue to win the war, we'll leave by 1966" vs. "The military campaign continues to make great progress. We should be able to leave by 1966." The latter is only implicitly conditional. I assume you take "without impairment of the war effort" in the third recommendation as the explicit condition, but I also see a difference between "We should be able to withdraw without impairment of the war effort" vs. "If it does not impair the war effort, we will withdraw." In the latter formulation, the withdrawal decision has not been made, and there is no indication of what the decision will be. In the former, which is what McNamara-Taylor actually say, the decision had been made, and a prediction was made that the withdrawal will probably not impair the war effort.

That would be the only point I would insist on. One could argue further, though, if one wanted to stretch it, that the phrase "without impairment of the war effort" refers more to how the action "should be explained" to the public (i.e. "in low-key") than to a real condition: the public should get the impression that the war effort will not be impaired. This interpretation is not illogical, because propaganda purposes aside, how could the military (or Kennedy) really have thought that withdrawal would not impair the war effort? It would have to.

You say that there was "no policy change" and no withdrawal policy, only a "first victory, then withdrawal" policy (until Tet). But this formulation gives the word "withdrawal" such a general sense that it means virtually nothing. Everybody, in that sense, wanted to withdraw, just as everybody wanted peace. The same is true of "victory."

First of all, you use the word with much more insistence than Kennedy did. McNamara-Taylor speak repeatedly of "progress" and "success," but only in one place of "victory," where they feel immediately compelled to qualify it as "the reduction of the insurgency" (PP Gravel 2:757). Their 6th recommendation defines this further as "reducing it to proportions manageable by the national security forces of the GVN, unassisted by the presence of U.S. military forces" (2:753). Kennedy omitted this qualification in the public statement, but he does not talk about "victory" either, nor about "winning," as Johnson did in NSAM 273.

Secondly, the question of what would constitute "victory" was the crux of the problem JFK and his successors faced throughout the war. A policy of defeat, of course, for any of them, would have been unthinkable. Therefore, all their policies had to be policies of victory, or at least appear to be so. What we are discussing is whether Kennedy came to the same conclusion about what would have to constitute "victory" as Johnson did. This question will probably remain unanswered, with arguments such as yours suggesting "Yes" and others (O'Donnell, Mansfield, etc.) suggesting "No." To say that Kennedy and Johnson both wanted victory, therefore, says little.

Whether this is "semantics" or not, we end up with two opposite versions of the "facts": there was/was not a withdrawal policy; it did/did not change; Johnson did/did not change it.

Why would you object to formulating your case in this way: JFK thought we were winning, so he planned to withdraw; Johnson decided we were not winning, so he reversed the withdrawal policy. This would put the discussion on the level where it belongs – of speculation: Did JFK *really* think we were winning? Did he *really* want to withdraw? Did LBJ *really* want to continue the withdrawal policy? Did LBJ *really* change his mind about the war sometime between December 1963 and March 1964? Would JFK have changed his policy, as Johnson did? These questions can be discussed separately from the facts, plainly established in the PP, that there

was a withdrawal policy, and Johnson reversed it.

What is the problem with saying that Johnson reversed the withdrawal policy because conditions changed? Your basic argument would still apply: JFK was a superhawk and would not have withdrawn without victory, and thus would have done the same thing Johnson did. But the argument, formulated in this way, is conjecture, and of course can be countered by conjecture. So what? But to insist that there *was* no withdrawal policy, or that if there was one it never changed, and that therefore Johnson did not reverse it, seems specious to me, frankly.

This is essentially the same problem I have with the other historians I quoted, with the significant difference that you are confronting the issue head-on. The tradition has been to avoid it. LBJ continued or expanded JFK's Vietnam policy, period. If the withdrawal plan is mentioned at all, it is glossed over. It is never stated plainly that Johnson reversed the withdrawal policy, or even that he reversed it because conditions changed. That plain truth is easily statable, and provable simply by citing the PP, but it does not happen.

True, it is happening now, and we have people like Schlesinger and Hilsman admitting it. That is Step 1, and these two even verge on Step 2, saying it is at least a "defensible premise" that JFK would have withdrawn completely. They draw the line at Step 3, calling the Garrison/Stone theory "palpable nonsense" (Hilsman) and "reckless, paranoid, really despicable fantasy, reminiscent of the wilder accusations of Joe McCarthy" (Schlesinger). Note that neither one makes the slightest attempt to justify his opinion in this regard, and that Schlesinger's hysterical reaction, implying that Stone is a fascist, is typical. This is what children do: "You're a creep!" says one kid. "*You're* a creep!" says the other. Stone is saying that the assassination was a fascist coup, so that makes him a fascist. This shows how hard the idea hits. "It was a fascist coup," says Stone. "What?" says Schlesinger. "And I didn't know it, still don't know it – or do you mean that I was in on it or went along with it? Why, that's despicable! Reckless! Paranoid! Why, you *fascist*, you!"

This is an interesting development, but not surprising. Neither JFK hagiography nor self-promotion explains it completely. Look at it through the propaganda model. If until now it has been impermissible to see the JFK-LBJ Vietnam policy as less than a perfect continuum, it's not surprising that opinions to the contrary have been few and far between. If it is now permissible, or becoming permissible, we would expect these opinions to multiply. Why would it be becoming permissible now? Because the truth will out, given time. The rush of conspiracy theories in the past few years, culminating in the Stone film, has resulted in too many people thinking impermissible thoughts. Damage control becomes necessary (a limited hang-out, as the CIA calls it). Ok, LBJ reversed the withdrawal policy, and maybe JFK wouldn't have – though this is unknowable. But a connection with the assassination? Unthinkable, or, when thought, "reckless," "paranoid," "despicable," etc. – exactly Schlesinger's reaction. Which does *not* mean Schlesinger is in on the conspiracy, but merely a victim of propaganda, like everyone.

How else do you explain the fact that the overwhelming majority of historians have tried so hard to avoid saying that Johnson reversed the withdrawal policy, despite the clear evidence to the contrary in the PP? (The reasons in your case, I assume, are different.) As you say, this "fact" has been known all along. But it has not been presented this way, as I tried to illustrate. I'm sure if I had the energy I could make the point convincingly.

Just one more example: the NYT PP. I don't know why the NYT PP is

generally referred to as an *edition* of the PP when it is only a summary by NYT reporters, with some documents added. The Gravel edition has the actual text, and is significantly different. The Gravel account gives 40 pages to the history of the withdrawal policy. The NYT reporters gloss over it in a way that cannot be simply to save space. NSAM 263 is not mentioned at all, and Kennedy's authorization of the McNamara-Taylor recommendations is mentioned only in passing, and inaccurately:

> [The report] asserted that the "bulk" of American troops could be withdrawn by the end of 1965. The two men proposed and – with the President's approval – announced that 1,000 Americans would be pulled out by the end of 1963 (p. 176).

That this "announcement" was in fact a White House foreign policy statement is cleverly disguised (McNamara made the announcement, but it was Kennedy speaking through him), along with the fact that the president also approved the more important recommendation – to withdraw all troops by 1966.

Earlier, the NYT reporter quotes a PP reference to the 1,000-man pullout (again ignoring the more significant total planned withdrawal by 1966) as "strange," "absurd," and "Micawberesque" (p. 113). Then he mentions a McNamara statement that

> ...the situation deteriorated so profoundly in the final five months of the Kennedy Administration...that the entire phase-out had to be formally dropped in early 1964.

The reporter's conclusion is that the PP account "presents the picture of an unbroken chain of decision-making from the final months of the Kennedy Administration into the early months of the Johnson Administration, whether in terms of the political view of the American stakes in Vietnam, the advisory build-up or the hidden growth of covert warfare against North Vietnam" (p. 114).

Notice how different this is from the actual (Gravel) account. It implies that the change in the withdrawal ("phase-out") policy began well within Kennedy's administration; Gravel says the change began in December 1963. The "unbroken chain of decision-making" and "advisory build-up" amounts to an emphatic statement that there never was a withdrawal plan, and that those 40 pages of the PP do not exist.

I think these differences are significant, particularly since the establishment line has followed the NYT version in this regard. Still, most historians should know that the Gravel edition presents a different picture, and one would not expect this kind of unanimity, if the propaganda imperatives were not at work. The Gravel account is simply ignored in this respect, except by the "wild men," who are in this case the "conspiracy buffs," though it does not require a conspiracy theory to state the facts as the Gravel PP state them.

Let me risk an analogy. Suppose Roosevelt had accepted his advisers recommendation not to drop the bomb, and made this policy by issuing a NSAM to that effect. "The war is going well and I don't want to kill *that* many Japs," he supposedly thought. He is murdered. Truman immediately orders a major review of the no-bomb policy and shortly thereafter, citing unforeseen developments in the progress of the war, drops the bomb.

Of course, the analogy is weak because we are talking about Japs as the victims

instead of 58,000 of our own red-blooded, but still, would you be comfortable saying Truman's decision to drop the bomb was a matter of "tactics"? Would you say there was no policy change, that Truman did not reverse Roosevelt's decision, that Roosevelt and Truman in fact had the same policy about dropping the bomb? Would you insist on saying this, as opposed to saying "Truman reversed Roosevelt's no-bomb policy because conditions changed"?

Add to this fictive scenario that Roosevelt's murder occurred under very suspicious circumstances, much of the evidence (and lack of it) pointing to the military-industrial-intelligence establishment, who badly wanted the bomb dropped for various (the usual) reasons. Would it be unreasonable to suspect a connection between the smaller crime of the murder of the president and the larger one of the dropping of the bomb?

You say (p. 9) that "if all of the claims about JFK's alleged policies and intentions collapse, then so does the interest of the assassination." That is partially true (not collapse but probably diminish), but so is the converse: If interest in the assassination collapses, so does the interest in JFK's Vietnam policy. Likewise, as the Stone movie shows, the more interest in the assassination, the more interest in Vietnam.

In my opinion, this is why the assassination cover-up has been maintained so long. People may not care too much about the murder of a president, even if it was a coup, but they still care about Vietnam. This is why it has taken a quarter of a century for people (including me) to start thinking about the possible connection, and why it is so important for the establishment to denounce the Stone movie. The idea that the conspirators not only took over the government and killed JFK and dozens of witnesses is one thing; the idea that they killed 58,000 Americans is quite another.

In any case, the issues of the assassination and Vietnam will not be separated until the assassination is clarified – which may take a while. It is not possible to separate them by clarifying the question of what JFK *would have* done in Vietnam, because the answer is unknowable. We are left with the fact of the policy change, which is now, thanks to the movie, entering the realm of permissible knowledge, the fact of the assassination, the many facts (and lack of them) that implicate the government, and the many as yet unknown, but knowable, facts such as how big is the hole is the back of JFK's skull, which could be ascertained simply by exhuming the body. (They dug up Zachary Taylor last year, but they are not likely to dig up JFK until he is as important to us as Zachary Taylor is, i.e. not at all.)

You say it would be a good idea for those interested in the assassination to stay away from discussions of Vietnam, and I'm sure, unfortunately, that the ruling elite could not agree with you more.

Chomsky had said: "I think it is a good idea for those who find the assassination an important issue to keep away from policy questions where there is a record that can be investigated."

But I think all voices should be heard. People can decide for themselves what is the truth, and should. If Stone, Prouty et al. get the facts wrong, it should be discussed. That's what we are doing, and if this shows anything it shows that it's not so easy. I don't mean to defend either one of these guys, but I don't think either deserves the names they have been called. Conjecture is one thing, but lying and distorting "facts" is another, and I don't see that they have done this. We are focussing in our discussion on one such "fact" presented in the film – that LBJ

reversed JFK's withdrawal plan – which you deny is a fact. But the coup theory is clearly a theory, and I see nothing fraudulent, fascist, reckless, paranoid, despicable, or fantastic about it. Depressing, yes.

I am not particularly happy that I seem to share some of the ideas of people like Lyndon LaRouche, Liberty Lobby, John Judge, Fletch Prouty, Jim Garrison, Oliver Stone, etc. (not to put these in the same category). But I don't suppose that you are overjoyed, either, to be agreeing with 99% (guessing) of the establishment (and perhaps 10-20% of the population at large) that there is no reason to suspect a connection between the assassination and Vietnam, and that there is no evidence of conspiracy or political significance in the assassination.

I think it would be fair to bear in mind that since much of the left has taken the position, willy nilly, of the establishment on this issue, all the disadvantages of radical dissent are on the other side. It's even worse than usual, because here the dissenters must dissent to the dissenters (e.g., me to you) as well as to the establishment. I don't consider Newman's faculty status, Prouty's reputation among "serious researchers," or the imprimatur of the National Academy of Sciences as an indication of anything. Why should the latter be more credible than the Warren Commission – as in fact it isn't, since their well-funded findings were shown by a lone researcher (Gary Mack) to be invalid (see Jim Marrs, *Crossfire*). Certainly it's what people say that counts, not their rank in the system or their reputation, neither of which necessarily represents their degree of competence, honesty, or freedom from mind control.

Here's another way of looking at it. Suppose there was as much uncertainty in 1963 among certain powerful elements about what JFK would do in Vietnam as there is now about what he *would* have done. If the war was important enough to them, this uncertainty could have been enough to bring about the coup. This has to be taken into account too: ultimately we are dealing with the question not so much of JFK's actual intentions but of how those intentions were *perceived* by the (possible) coup plotters.

Going through your letter, I find that most of the points you make that I would quarrel with are covered by what I've already said. My objections would disappear if you said "Assumptions changed, therefore policy changed" instead of "Assumptions changed, but policy didn't." There is plenty of room for argument about the assumptions, but we seem to be arguing – perhaps unnecessarily – about the facts. If you can point to new evidence that Kennedy changed his assumptions about the war after Oct. 11 (or after Nov. 1 or 20 for that matter), that would support the thesis that he *might* have changed his withdrawal policy, but it would still be speculation, and it would not change the fact (i.e. what I consider a fact but you don't) that he did not change his policy, and Johnson did.

At one point, in apparent contradiction to much of the rest of what you say, you put it just this way (p. 8): "As assessments of the precondition changed, so did policy." That is, if you mean Johnson's assessments, and Johnson's policy. In any case, you do acknowledge here that policy did change.

You say (p. 1), that the Schlesinger-Newman-Stone thesis is that JFK "had a secret plan to withdraw." This might apply to Newman, who says JFK was pretending to agree with Harkins et al. that the war was going well so that he could withdraw, but not to Stone or Schlesinger, who merely acknowledge that JFK planned to withdraw. It was no secret. NSAM 263 was secret to the public, but not to insiders, the White House statement on Oct. 2 was not secret, and neither were the press reports at the time, as you point out.

You say (p. 3) "If JFK had had the slightest intention to withdraw..." But what

does NSAM 263 express if not his intention to withdraw? You say it expresses "virtually nothing," that it "authorizes" the McNamara-Taylor recommendations, but that "there is no commitment to implementing anything." What, then, would constitute such a commitment, in your view?

Then you say JFK was "reluctant to make the commitment to withdrawal recommended by his advisers," which implies that he did make the commitment – again a contradiction.

You say (next paragraph), apparently referring to the White House statement (or to NSAM 263?), that JFK "insisted on weakening" the recommendations and "dissociating himself from any time scale." But the time scale ("end of this year" and "end of 1965") is explicitly mentioned in the both the public statement and in the recommendations authorized by NSAM 263.

You say (same paragraph) that the withdrawal plan, which JFK "weakened," "had been drawn up by the JCS." Do you mean to imply that the JCS (or McNamara or Taylor) were less hawkish than Kennedy? Do you think that they would have drawn up anything that Kennedy didn't want to have? Do you think, if it were not for JFK's more hawkish influence, that McNamara and Taylor would have produced an even stronger case for withdrawal? You say (p. 4) that the internal record does not show that JFK was "more reluctant than his advisers to move towards withdrawal," implying that everybody but Kennedy was anxious to withdraw. This is precisely opposite to all the accounts I have read, which indicate that almost all of his advisers were urging him to escalate and against withdrawal. Taylor said Kennedy was the *only* man reluctant to send in ground forces. The initiative for withdrawal (based on success) came from JFK, not McNamara or Taylor. I think we saw exactly what McNamara and Taylor wanted *after* the assassination. The only puzzling thing might be that McNamara and Taylor recommended withdrawal at all, but it is not puzzling if we consider that on Oct. 2, 1963, they were still working for Kennedy.

You say (p. 3) that NSAM 273 differs slightly from the McNamara-Taylor recommendations because by then there were different factual assumptions. These assumptions, however, and the changes in them, are not evident in the document. What is evident, and explicit, is that the withdrawal policy should continue. Whether there was a change in factual assumptions or not, there was no change in policy.

The Bundy draft complicates matters, for the very reasons you mention. The appearance of this document now is very convenient, much too convenient. After all, the CIA has known about the Scott thesis for twenty years. Now Schlesinger pops up, saying just what Scott said, that 273 constitutes a reversal of JFK's withdrawal policy. Together with the argument that Bundy wrote the draft on Nov. 21 "for Kennedy," the conclusion is that JFK reversed his own withdrawal policy the day before the assassination! Of course, this makes a fool (and/or a tool) of Schlesinger, but I doubt that he cares.

In my opinion, the Bundy draft is either a plant (inauthentic), or, if he did actually write it on Nov. 21, he wrote it for Johnson. If it was a coup, Bundy was in on it for sure.

By the way, you know who called off the airstrikes at the Bay of Pigs, don't you – nine hours after Kennedy had given his official approval? Why did Bundy refer Cabell and Bissell to Rusk, who was completely outside the chain of command in this operation? Why did Cabell and Bissell then refuse to talk directly with JFK about what they knew perfectly well – as did Bundy – would ensure the failure of the invasion? They did not hesitate to talk directly with him at other points in the

operation, when it was not crucial. Bundy is a very clever fellow, and the cleverest thing he did was not getting fired along with Dulles, Cabell and Bissell. The Dulles brothers, Cabell brothers (Earle was mayor of Dallas when JFK was shot, controlled the motorcade route, etc.), the Bundy brothers (McGeorge was Bissell's student at Yale) – all of them CIA all the way.

As far as I'm concerned, the Bundy draft is totally irrelevant to our discussion. Kennedy didn't see it and didn't approve it. You can take it as evidence that JFK did not change his mind about withdrawal (para. 2), that he did (para. 6), or that Johnson did, or did not. All the possibilities are open. This is how the CIA likes to have things. But I for one am not going to waste a second thinking about what Bundy might have been thinking when he supposedly wrote something that Kennedy never saw, and I certainly won't accept it as evidence for what Kennedy might have thought. This particular lying genocidal fascist scumbag is still alive, so if anybody is interested in his views they can ask him. I wouldn't bother.

As for establishing "the record," I have already conceded that 263 and 273 do not differ regarding the withdrawal policy, which you agree with. Where we disagree is, you say it never changed, or not until after Tet, and I agree with the PP that Johnson changed it between Dec. 1963 and March 1964. (And it changed again after Tet, of course.)

There seems to be no reliable documentary record of the Honolulu meeting, and as far as I know there is no indication that Kennedy knew any more about what happened there than we do, and no evidence that he changed his mind about how the war was going, before or after Honolulu, or after Oct. 11, or after Nov. 1. More to the point, there is no evidence that he changed his policy.

You say it was assumed by NSAM 273 that the GVN was solidly behind the war after the Nov. 1 coup. Johnson, Rusk, McNamara et al. had been against the coup, however, because they saw no viable alternative to Diem. What made them change their minds?

What you see as the second assumption contradicts the first. If the GVN were now ready to fight, the military situation would have been *more* favorable, not less. In any case, I don't see either of these assumptions in NSAM 273.

I agree with you that some of Kennedy's public statements contradict his policy. That is quite normal. I also agree that a president who wanted to get out and didn't care about losing face or maintaining the support of his own administration, the military, the ruling elite, and the conservative elements in Congress and the population at large, would have acted differently. But as you say, JFK was a political animal. He could not ignore these things. His problem was to get out under the pretext of success, if not victory. That was still possible in 1963, when only about 50 Americans had died in Vietnam.

When I said that Stone deserves credit for informing people about the withdrawal plan, I meant the general public today. Despite the press reports at the time, and despite the PP (Gravel, but not NYT), the consensus of historians has been that JFK got us into Vietnam, and Johnson got us in deeper. I'm sure that if you had taken a survey of college students before the film came out, you would have found that almost all of them thought this, but almost none of them knew about JFK's withdrawal plan – unless they had read some of the assassination literature.

If you disagree with Newman's conclusion that the top brass were lying about the war, how do you explain his numerous examples of negative reports from the field that were deliberately suppressed? This deception need not have been as elaborate as you say, or elaborate at all. All you need are a few key people to keep

the screws on, and I can't think of any organization where this should be easier than in the military or (especially) the CIA. If a lot of people were optimistic, it doesn't mean they all knew the truth, or were in a position to know the truth, or had any reason (or the guts) to doubt what their superiors and colleagues were saying. It's easy to spread lies from the top. Look at the Warren Commission. For every "authority" who lies, there can be thousands or millions who assume it is the gospel truth. This applies to Vietnam as well as to the assassination. The "huge edifice of deception," as you call it, does not mean everybody is lying, just that everybody is deceived. Even within the Warren Commission, most members may have been merely deceived, with just a few (Dulles, Ford, Warren) the deceivers. Accepting, believing and repeating lies doesn't make people liars.

My point about "stupidity" was not that this explains anything: just the contrary. This is what the public is often left with as an "explanation," though of course it is expressed differently. Glaspie was not "stupid," she made an "unfortunate mistake." Vietnam was an "unfortunate mistake." That, in plain language, means stupidity. I don't know what the Arab leaders knew about Saddam's plans, but with 200,000 Iraqi soldiers poised to invade Kuwait, for Glaspie to say the US doesn't care about Arab border disputes was stupid – assuming the US (and I'm sure Glaspie was saying exactly what Washington told her to say) did not want Saddam to invade. I believe Bush wanted exactly that. Saddam was sandbagged.

When I said I knew that Vietnam was a "mistake" in 1963-64, I meant I felt then the way most people do now. This is, again, what we are asked to believe: that bright guys like Bundy make mistakes. But as I said, what always bothered me was that I never believed I was smarter than somebody like Bundy. The result was extended puzzlement.

I don't feel that way now. Of course Vietnam was not a mistake. Of course Bundy wasn't stupid. They accomplished exactly what you say – and don't forget the $570 billion for the warmongers, the domestic economic stimulus, the war as a distraction from the civil rights movement, and (to get real nasty) the reduction of the Third World population at home and in Southeast Asia.

No, planners are not stupid. What I meant was, the establishment's historical explanations, i.e. propaganda, lead us to that conclusion, if we are willing to call things by their right name. This is a dead end, a conundrum, unless we go one further step and realize that they are not only not stupid, they are not on our side. As long as we are prisoners of the propaganda that the government is on our side, i.e. "well-intentioned," we must accept that they do stupid things (if we do any thinking at all), though we know they are not stupid. Once disabused of this, what we have been forced to view as mistakes and stupidity, i.e. the established version of history, appears quite differently.

What I meant about the propaganda model was simply that it makes sense, and is a good theory, even though it can't be proved. I said that because you compared the Garrison/Stone theory to a theory that Hinkley shot Reagan because he thought Reagan was a closet Leninist. You said they could be said to be equally good theories because neither can be disproved. But a theory is not good because it cannot be disproved, e.g. the propaganda model/theory. Furthermore, if a good theory is one that provides the best explanation for the most facts (and lack of facts, including evidence withheld, destroyed and manipulated), then the coup theory of the assassination is a good one.

You say there isn't a shred of evidence for this theory, that it is remote from the factual record and would have required phenomenal discipline of thousands of people. I think just the opposite is true on all points. We needn't get into the morass

of details on the assassination; there are plenty of books on that. But I see no place where it deviates from the "factual record," inasmuch as there is one, including the fact we are discussing here: that Johnson reversed the withdrawal policy. I don't think thousands of people were actively involved in the murder – maybe a couple of dozen. The propaganda model takes care of the rest. Take the people present at the autopsy, for example – although they have not all been identified. Nearly all of them, even Humes at one point, have described wounds quite different from those shown in the official photos and X-rays, at least the ones that have been published. This means the latter are fakes, as many of the medical personnel have unequivocally said. Who could have done that? Not most of the people present at the autopsy. And so it goes. It doesn't take many people to manipulate others, just the right ones. Fear, intimidation, propaganda, false sense of duty, ideological blindness, etc. do the rest. Everything you say about the propaganda model applies here. Nevertheless, over the years, people have come forward, and much evidence has come out.

Aren't you applying a much more restrictive standard for evidence in this case than in others? The Church committee turned up no evidence that the CIA had ever assassinated anyone or been involved in any assassination plots other than the one to kill Castro, but does this mean there was no evidence? Is there more evidence for US government involvement in the assassinations of Diem, Lumumba, Trujillo, Allende, etc. than in the case of Kennedy? On the larger scale, what evidence is there that US foreign policy is guided by economic and not humanitarian interests? What evidence is there that the US was not fighting for the freedom of the South Vietnamese, or the freedom of the Kuwaitis?

In all of these cases, arguments are based on "evidence," but what makes this evidence so much better than the evidence in the JFK assassination that theories in one case are considered tenable and in the other untenable? Suppose the National Academy of Sciences concluded that there is no evidence that the US is an imperialistic country or that Washington is the terrorist capital of the world, as you have written.

Chomsky had offered me the following example of conspiracy craziness:

Thus when the National Academy of Sciences refutes by careful experiment the one reason offered by the House Committee to question the Warren Report, we can simply conclude that the scientists are in on the conspiracy. Anyone who knows them personally knows that this is laughable...

I was surprised by the intensity of his faith in the integrity of Academy scientists.

Would that settle the matter and relegate all such claims to the realm of pure speculation? You say in reference to the JFK/coup theory that "all counterevidence can be eliminated simply by appeal to the assumption" – I guess meaning the assumption that the theory is correct. Isn't this how all theories are investigated and tested? How do you investigate and test the theory (or assumption) that the Vietnam War was a war of aggression by the US against the South Vietnamese people for global strategic and economic reasons? Do you not eliminate the counterevidence by appeal to the assumption? Do you really think there is more evidence for this than for the theory that the assassination was a conspiracy, or for the coup theory?

Of course I would like to have what you've written on the withdrawal thesis, if you care to send it. In the end I guess we'll just have to agree to disagree. No harm done. I understand your position, but frankly I find it inconsistent with your thinking on other subjects. I can understand the need to excise the Camelot blubber and debunk the "JFK-as-dove" mythology, but the withdrawal plan doesn't make JFK a dove any more than Reagan's withdrawal from Lebanon makes Reagan a dove. One could argue that no president, by definition, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, can be a dove. However, "the man who escalated international terrorism to outright aggression" (p. 1), i.e. counterinsurgency to war (commitment of US combat troops), in Vietnam was not Kennedy; it was Johnson.

I admit that my interest in the withdrawal policy reversal follows from my interest in the assassination. I don't care about Kennedy's historical image and have no illusions about the sublimity of leaders. But I did not mean to suggest that "assassination theorists should separate themselves from consideration of JFK's secret plans" (p. 9).

Chomsky had told me he thought it was "a good idea for those who find the assassination an important issue to keep away from policy questions where there is a record that can be investigated."

Why should they? Assassination theorists need not be Camelot enthusiasts (though many are, regrettably), and they need not be concerned with secret plans, since the withdrawal plan was not secret.

Your position on the assassination(s) puzzles me. I agree that the assassinations of Hampton and King are politically significant, but why is that of King only "possibly so" and that of the Kennedys not at all? The two great popular movements of the sixties, civil rights and antiwar, were historically intertwined, and in terms of their political impact remained a combined threat to the establishment beyond their ideological split. The largest common denominator was the war. King was killed not long after he (finally) came out against it, RFK likewise. It's not difficult to imagine the enormity of the threat posed to the ruling elite by MLK, with blacks and the poor behind him, and RFK, with the white middle-class antiwar movement rallying behind him (after McCarthy chickened out), both at the height of their popularity in the summer of 68.

One may say that the "Wise Men" had already decided to start winding down the war by then, but it wasn't just the war that was at stake. I don't want to get into another discussion over whether RFK would have ended the war any quicker than Nixon did (!), but from my recollection of the temper of the times, and confirmed by everything I've read, if I had been one of the 1% running the country at that time I would have been scared to death. Scared that the war would end too soon and too abruptly, scared that the truth about it (that it never should have occurred) would come out too fast, scared that the truth about the JFK assassination would come out, scared that too many people might get the idea they really can change the government if they get together, scared that that pushy bleeding-heart knee-jerk liberal phony little Kennedy brother might give that Commie bimbo King the idea that niggers are people too, etc. – in short, that all hell would break loose. I know that the record shows that Johnson did much more for blacks than either Kennedy did, but that is not the way they were perceived. Nobody doubted that Johnson was a racist; there was some doubt (justified or not), even among many blacks, about the Kennedys. For keeping blacks in place, i.e. running in place behind the carrots that new legislation offered them, Johnson was a safer bet than

the Kennedys, and I'm sure this was the consensus not only among Texas oilmen.

To demonstrate or even claim the political significance of *any* of the assassinations, one has to get into conspiracy theory. It has become clear to me that the left traditionally eschews conspiracy theories, and it is true that fascists have abused such theories in the past (and continue to do so). So what? I am not going to eschew Marxist arguments because Erich Honecker uses them (or used them). The claim that there is an ideological difference between "institutional" and "conspiracy" theories (re. Michael Albert's recent *Z* magazine article) is not only wrong, but counterproductive. They can and should be part of the same analysis.

On the question of "evidence," it should be obvious that if we are content to wait for the government to indict itself, and in the case of JFK to declare itself illegitimate, which is exactly what we expect if we depend on investigations like the Warren Commission and the House committee, we'll wait forever – just as long as we'll have to wait for some president to declare Washington the terrorist capital of the world. Nor can we wait for the truth to be revealed in a court of law (but see Mark Lane's *Plausible Denial*), by a congressional committee, or by the National Academy of Sciences. When the politics becomes important enough, there is no science, only scientists, no matter how respectable they may be. The Magic Bullet theory is proof enough of that.

This doesn't mean the "evidence doesn't mean a lot" (p. 9), or that it doesn't exist. It is massive.

Chomsky had said that assassination conspiracy theorists are "in a realm where evidence doesn't mean a lot," because they can eliminate all counterevidence "simply by appeal to the assumption," that is, by assuming the counterevidence is part of the conspiracy.

I don't see how anyone can read much of the assassination literature and come to the conclusion that there is no evidence of conspiracy and no evidence of government complicity, which seems to be your position. Obviously, if you believe that, there is no reason to be interested in the question (p. 10) if the government is so corrupt (and the population, particularly the journalistic and academic elite, so propagandized) that it can murder the president (and Fred Hampton, MLK, RFK, etc.) and keep it secret for decades.

Note, however, that what the government and the mainstream media may keep as an official secret need not always be, and in this case is not, a secret to the majority of the population. Opinion polls have consistently shown that in contradistinction to the journalistic and academic elite, most Americans believe the JFK assassination (and probably the RFK and MLK assassinations, though I haven't seen any figures on these) was a conspiracy. According to a *Time*/CNN poll *before* the Stone film, half the population thinks the military or the CIA might have been involved. Compare this with the press coverage of the film. It is the best example I can cite of the gulf between common sense and manufactured elite consent – a point you have made on other issues many times.

By now I think it's clear that the Stone movie will have no lasting effect or political impact, whether one approves of it or not. I would like to see people on the streets demanding answers, but instead of that we see Ford and Nixon "demanding" the release of the classified files, which of course will reveal nothing except perhaps further disinformation to cloud the trail and keep the "buffs" busy. I suppose it will take a catastrophe at least equal to Vietnam to reach the critical mass of 1968 again, and our job is to prepare ourselves and others for that.

Not a very encouraging note to end on, but all I see is apathy, people waiting for the fire to reach their butts. I guess there's nothing new about that.

I'm glad my letters have been helpful to you. Yours have been a big help to me too, and I am very grateful and flattered that you have taken the time and effort to write them.

With best regards,
Michael

But I found that agreeing to disagree was not that easy, especially after I read Chomsky's article in Z magazine in October. I decided to write a letter to the editor, and send Chomsky a copy. Z didn't publish it, but it later appeared in slightly different form in The Third Decade *("Chomsky on JFK and Vietnam," 9.6:8-10, 1993). This was the article that caught Vince Salandria's attention and led to my joining his correspondence group (see my* Correspondence with Vincent Salandria*, 2007)..*

25 Dec. 1992
Dear Noam,

This may seem a strange thing to be doing on Christmas day, but I sent the enclosed letter off to *Z* yesterday, and we are driving to Prague tomorrow for a few days' change of scenery, so I figured I might as well get this off today.

I don't think they'll print the letter since it's a bit late – I didn't get the copy of your article until a few days ago, sent by a former student who subscribes to *Z* – and probably too long. Of course I had the manuscript copy you sent me, but I didn't know where it would appear.

On re-reading I see that I've made at least one mistake. You do of course mention the PP account, but not the parts I quote, which I think are the point. Otherwise, as far as I can tell, it's a fair reading of what you say and of the points I made back in August. I realize that it's strong, but I feel strongly about the issue. In my last letter I said we'd have to agree to disagree, but I am finding that difficult. If it were anybody else but you – and I mean anybody – it wouldn't bother me so much. As it is, I can't help feeling that one of us is very wrong on a crucial issue, and that does stick in the gut.

Sincerely,
Michael

Chomsky responded (1/7/93) that my letter to Z made it "even clearer that we've left the bounds of rational discussion." That he was not pleased was clear. "I'll omit the sneering rhetoric," he said. This was presumably in reference to my article ("Chomsky on JFK and Vietnam"). "That's your problem," he added, "not mine."

My "effort to distinguish 'assumption of military success' from 'condition for withdrawal," he said, was "entirely without merit. If plans are made on the assumption of success, and the assumption proves wrong, it is logical to expect the plans to change. "The case that maybe they would have been carried out anyway, even with the explicit assumption on which they were based withdrawn, is too outlandish to merit consideration." I was "now really grasping at straws," which was not surprising, given the "overwhelming evidence" against my position. "NSAM 263, like the rest of the documentary record, is explicit about the condition of victory."

The "M-thesis" (mine) – that the withdrawal plan was based on the assumption of military success – is "uncontroversially true, and completely – totally – without interest." The "C-thesis" – that JFK planned to withdraw without victory – has been "refuted across the board and without

exception." Kennedy was committed to "victory" in Vietnam, went along with the withdrawal plan only "reluctantly" and "on the explicit presumption of victory."

Chomsky should have called the "C-thesis" the "N-thesis," since he meant Newman's thesis, but the confusion is understandable considering that it is really Chomsky's thesis too in the sense that this is the one he is determined to refute.

"On this," Chomsky said, "we seem to agree, except that (for reasons that are unclear) you think the M-thesis is important. It is not." Everyone, including the hawks, was "looking forward to withdrawal by the end of '65 on the presumption of victory." JFK too. I had failed to make clear why these "uncontroversial matters" were of any interest at all.

23 Jan. 1993
Dear Noam,

Thanks for giving it one more try. I'll make this as short as possible, since I guess we're both tired of it.

As for the rhetoric, I'm sorry if I overdid it. I didn't mean to sneer.

I think we can simplify, and agree, finally, on the facts, although you find them uninteresting.

As for the "C-thesis" – that JFK planned to withdraw without victory – the one you wish to refute, we can drop it. I am not defending it.

The "M-thesis" – that JFK planned to withdraw on the assumption of military success – is a fact, as you say (not a "thesis"):

It is surely true, and uncontroversial, that when McNamara, Bundy, and the other planners realized that their assumptions were false, they withdrew the plans [for withdrawal] based on those assumptions, and that LBJ followed their advice (dragging his feet all the way.

We should also be able to agree that it is equally true and uncontroversial that this change in plans – and of the assumptions – took place *after* the assassination. As far as I know, NSAM 263 is the last document that directly attests to JFK's plans – and assumptions – regarding the war, and there is no evidence that his plans or assumptions changed after that.

We thus have:

1. a president (JFK) who thought he was winning a war (with a total of 50 or so casualties) and could therefore end it

2. his murder

3. a new president (LBJ) who began to doubt the success of the war within days of the murder of his predecessor and reversed the withdrawal policy within days, weeks, or months (take your pick).

You take these facts, if I understand you now, as uncontroversially true, uninteresting, and – though you did not use the word – coincidental, at least until proven otherwise. Here we disagree. I am content to leave it at that.

We can also agree that the policy reversal has been treated as unimportant in Establishment propaganda (with, as you say, some exceptions) and by "historians of the war, independent of their political persuasion." You say they are right, that "they treat the withdrawal plans as without much importance, for a simple reason: they were without much importance." Here too we disagree.

I say they are behaving in full accordance with the (dominant, but not the only)

propaganda model (PM 1) that dictates: "No Vietnam policy change between JFK and LBJ." As for the apparent exceptions, Hilsman and Schlesinger, I have no quarrel with your pre- and post-Tet analysis. Post-Tet, in order to accommodate the Schlesingers and Hilsmans who wish to dissociate themselves with the US defeat, PM 1 can be modified to PM 2 (though PM 1 remains dominant): "LBJ reversed JFK's policy, and JFK might have acted differently" – but God forbid that this should imply any connection with the assassination (note Schlesinger's hysterical insistence on this point).

I am referring to Arthur Schlesinger's review of JFK *("*JFK*: Truth and Fiction,"* Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 10, 1992). Schlesinger reads Johnson's NSAM 273 as "reversing the Kennedy withdrawal policy." But to connect this with the assassination, as Stone and Garrison do, is "reckless, paranoid, really despicable fantasy."*

PM 2 will be extended in due time to PM 3 – that powerful, but "renegade," elements in the CIA and elsewhere were behind the assassination. Eventually, the passage of time will allow the arrival of PM 4, which will be a version of the coup d'état theory (which now has the status of a paranoid pipe dream), with the difference that by then the world will be assumed to be (and may be) a completely different (i.e., reformed) place, and nobody will give a damn about Vietnam. Do you notice anyone getting upset now at the suggestions (treated seriously even by *Newsweek*) that Churchill and Roosevelt had prior knowledge of the attack on Pearl Harbor and chose to let it happen for strategic reasons?

Newsweek *11/25/91. See Chap. 3.9.*

Of course I am talking here about the dominant PMs shared by the elite, not necessarily by the general population, among whom PM 4 is already well established. This is a striking demonstration of the degree of control exercised by the ruling class, regardless of which PM you consider closer to the truth. Half the population thinks the assassination may have been a coup d'état (PM 4), with Vietnam as a direct consequence, the message is flashed across the silver screen to millions – and nothing happens.

The lesson is clear: they have us by the balls. Result: further resignation. The Stone film may have been a bit of a gamble by Time Warner, the biggest propaganda machine in history, but it was well calculated, and it worked. The coup theory has been effectively laid to rest, at least for the time being, and the more general point has been made again, with emphasis: it doesn't matter at all what "the people" think. This particular PM, that we are powerless, is of course a total lie, but it is firmly entrenched, and the end effect of the Stone film, unfortunately, is to entrench it further.

You ask how I would answer your questions about Schlesinger. To the extent that it is worthwhile trying to dig into people's individual psyches, we do not have to assume that he was either lying or ignorant, pre- or post-Tet. He believed what he was supposed to believe, according to PM 1 or PM 2, as one evolved into the other. The third alternative – that there was no withdrawal plan, even one based on the assumption of military success ("victory" if you like) – can be eliminated, as I hope we can finally agree.

Schlesinger's behavior is a fine example of the propaganda model at work, applying more readily to academic elites than to the less "educated" population,

who are much slower to conform.

I wrote to Schlesinger recently, by the way, to ask him about the phone call Rusk supposedly made to Kennedy the night before the Bay of Pigs invasion, since the account in *A Thousand Days* implies that he was there (at Glen Ora) when the call came.

His reply was that he did not have the time to refresh his memory of those events. His memory of critical events he (may have) personally witnessed is not directly accessible, even to himself. He must "refresh" them. How would he go about this, even if he wished to? This is a man, neither a liar nor an ignoramus, who has consistently done what has been expected of him, and what he expects of himself, according to the evolving models of permissible thought which he submits to. I don't think I need to explain further. You wrote the book *[Manufacturing Consent]*.

One more time on the Bundy draft business: 1) Stone started working on *JFK* long before the declassification (at least summer 1989); 2) that particular aspect/version of the coup theory (that 273 reversed 263) has been around since 1972 (Scott); 3) it doesn't matter anyway (my point).

Chomsky had said my comments on the Bundy draft 273 were "...; I'll skip the only adjective that comes to mind." It was declassified in January 1991, "before Stone's film, at a time when there was little interest in Garrison's version" of the assassination. In other words, it could not be a false document, as I had suggested, created to detract from the film's thesis, because it was declassified 11 months before the film was released.

Chomsky must know, however, that such a commercial film can hardly be prepared in secrecy, and government agencies would certainly have known about the film before January 1991, if they were interested in knowing about such things – as I believe they were (and are).

I meant that as I had said in my letter/article, the draft 273 doesn't matter, doesn't determine anything, because you can interpret it any way you choose. You can argue about whether it is significantly different from LBJ's 273 (Newman), or not significantly different (Chomsky). Then you can argue about whether 273 was really LBJ's, or JFK's, since it was penned one day before the assassination. Chomsky and Newman seem to agree that is was JFK's.

What I was trying (in vain) to get Chomsky to see was the salient point that both versions of 273 explicitly (Paragraph 2) continued JFK's withdrawal policy as stated in 263. The official changes in policy, clearly reversing the withdrawal policy in favor of escalation, came in the first few months of LBJ's administration. And that is the entire point: the change came after the assassination. Whatever the differences between 263 and draft 273, or draft 273 and final 273, the withdrawal policy did not officially change according to those documents; it changed according to documents issued later. In other words, I was trying to say, the whole discussion about 273 and its draft was completely irrelevant, unless we wish to assume that Paragraph 2 of 273 is simply a bald-faced lie.

I did not bring up the matter of the Bundy draft again, but in his next letter (2/11/93), Chomsky supplied the adjective he had skipped in his letter of 1/7/93: "irrelevant." (I suspect originally it was something stronger.) Why? Because "the draft was declassified, pretty much on the normal time scale, before anyone knew of what Stone might be doing."

The illogic here merits attention. First of all, what is the "normal time scale" for declassifying documents? Second, how could it be "normal" for the draft to be declassified (on 1/31/91) 13 years after the final version (May 1978)? Third, as I have said, plenty of people knew what Stone was doing with JFK before January 1991. Fourth, Chomsky is begging the question: my comments are only "irrelevant" if you assume that his *comments are correct, which they are not.*

There was another reason why my comments were "irrelevant," namely that falsification of the kind I was postulating was "absolutely unattested in the documentary record." I should note, he remonstrated, "that it would not involve just Bundy – also, all the other top advisers, the State Department historians, etc."

What I should note here, too, is that this point is different from the one that follows. Here Chomsky is dismissing out of hand not the larger conspiracy of the assassination and the war (discussed next), but the mini-conspiracy that would be involved in producing a false government document. These are conspiracies of immensely different proportions, and the fact that Chomsky dismisses both with equal vehemence shows that he is thinking purely categorically here, not realistically.

It is in fact an interesting to ask how many people might be involved in forging such a document. Why did Chomsky assume that "all the top advisers" and "State Department historians" (did he mean the authors of the Pentagon Papers*?) would have to be "involved"? What does this mean? It only takes one man to write a letter, and presumably one man could slip it into whatever original archive preserves such things (presuming there is one – another interesting question). Did Chomsky mean that "all" these people – and how many are we talking about, exactly, a half-dozen, perhaps? – would have to remember, in 1991, NOT having seen that piece of paper in 1963? Does Chomsky have such faith in "State Department historians" that if they do not object to the appearance of the document in 1991, and accuse the government (for whom they work, or worked) of forging it, then that must mean the document is authentic?*

> Finally, I agree that it is difficult to conceive of a coup being carried out under the noses of so many people (about 220 million). But it would not have required nearly as many conspirators as you imagine. Just look at Schlesinger. He was close to the action, and I don't think he was a conspirator, a liar, or a fool, either then, when he conformed to PM 1, or now, when he conforms to PM 2. Why should *anyone* have thought differently? That takes care of 99.9 % of everybody involved. As for the rest, the conspirators themselves (e.g., for my money, Bundy), surely you don't expect them to have left a paper trail, or to confess. A historical first? So what? So was the holocaust, the moon landing, the capitalization of the Soviet Union, etc.
> Best regards,
> Michael

Chomsky replied on 2/11/93, mostly repeating his version of the "facts," which are "well-established, and about as uncontroversial as historical facts of this nature can be." "Specifically," he continued, "contrary to what you say, there was no policy reversal. The logic "is extremely clear. Those who have any faith that JFK might have reversed his invariant policy, and called for withdrawal even with impairment of the war effort, are assuming that he had some special quality that distinguished him from all of his advisers and associates, and that he kept so secret that none of them had an inkling of it and it has left no trace in the voluminous record." If I were to "think it through," I would see that this position came down to nothing but "religious faith, akin to faith in the Messiah."

> April 5, 1993
> Dear Noam,
> First I must try again to make clear to you that my motivation for persisting on this point has nothing to do with hero-worship, despite your comments about "millenarian movements," etc.

Chomsky had said (2/11/93) that what I called the "coup" theory of the assassination was supported by "no evidence at all, just faith in JFK's hidden mystical qualities." We were dealing here, he said, with "faith and doctrine, not reason." He characterized this as a "millenarian movement" in his Z article.

> The coup theory, to which our discussion is directly connected, is in my opinion the most powerful intellectual force for potential revolutionary change that is likely to come along. Discussions of yet another example of despicable US policy, however often repeated and well footnoted, are nothing compared to this. If any idea can mobilize significant numbers of people and lead to radical change, this is the one. Otherwise we'll have to wait for the next big war, depression or other catastrophe. I don't think I am exaggerating.
>
> Suppose you, for example, agreed with me. Add the thousands (literally – no need for modesty) that would follow your lead to the millions – half the US population, according to the polls – who already think Garrison/Stone may be right, and what do you think would happen? If ever there was a chance for peaceful revolution, this is it, and I see the chance slipping by. The point is not to chase down individual culprits, as the anti-conspiracy theorists contend. The point is to use this most dramatic example to expose and destroy the *structure* of secret government and the inherent collusion of the national security state with the anti-democratic capitalist forces which combined to make the coup, the war, and the continuing cover-up possible.
>
> My motivation is therefore quite simply that if I can change your mind on this point, I feel I would be doing a service to what I presume is our mutual cause. JFK hagiography has absolutely nothing to do with it.
>
> I suppose you think that besides having messianic illusions I have been overly influenced by Fletch Prouty, since I think I mentioned that I correspond with him (and met him a couple of years ago at his home).

Chomsky had said (2/11/93) that he had talked with Prouty for about 15 minutes 25 years earlier and "realized that he couldn't be believed if he said it's raining outside," and that "every other serious researcher, independent of politics, has drawn the same conclusion." This judgment, Chomsky said, was "nailed down tight by the current book" (JFK: The CIA, Vietnam and the Plot to Assassinate John F. Kennedy, *NY: Birch Lane Press, 1992).*

> I'm not interested in defending him, but I honestly see nothing in his latest book or the previous one, or in his letters, that remotely justifies calling him a "raving fascist" or a "fraud." He is short on footnotes, yes, and his view of the world is depressing (if that's what you meant), but – appalled as you will be to hear it – not fundamentally different from yours (or mine), in my opinion. For example, you wrote in *Z* last July-August:
>
> > Another objective [of "the corporate sector, its political agents, and ideological servants"] is to establish a de facto world government insulated from popular awareness or interference, devoted to the task of ensuring that the world's human and material resources are freely available to the Transnational Corporations and international banks that are to control the global system.

> Prouty could have written that. Chomsky calls it the "corporate sector"; he calls it the High Cabal. Others call it the "ruling class," the "power elite," the "military-industrial-intelligence complex," etc. What's the difference? You think Prouty is a raving fascist fraud, he thinks you're "on the payroll" (CIA), and I think you're both wrong – about each other – and both right about a lot else.

Chomsky had referred to Prouty as a "raving fascist" (5/21/92) and to "pure frauds like Prouty" (7/1/92). Prouty's equally inimical opinion of Chomsky – though he did not remember having met or talked with him – was expressed in a letter to me.

> Which leaves me in the middle of nowhere, I guess, but that's my problem. Re. your "facts":
>
> 1. What you call "Thesis I" and "IA" do not exist. They are *facts* – namely, NSAM 263 and the three McNamara-Taylor recommendations it approves. These recommendations were not "basic policy" but Kennedy's *last* specific policy directive regarding Vietnam.

What Chomsky had called the "M-thesis" he had now re-named "Thesis I: the US should withdraw after victory was assured" (2/11/93). This was "basic policy" that "never changed" until after the 1968 Tet offensive. But "the question that continually arose was whether that policy could be implemented with a specific plan."

"Thesis IA" was fully consistent with the "unchanging policy" of Thesis I: "there was a plan to implement the policy stated in Thesis I. As NSAM 263 put it, the US should plan to withdraw 1000 men by the end of 1963 and the rest by the end of 1965 if this could be done 'without impairment of the war effort.'"

> 2. There is no indication in NSAM 263 that Kennedy was "hesitant" or had "reservations" about the recommendations he implemented. Your speculation as to Kennedy's reason for not formally announcing the 1000-man withdrawal does not amount to a "reservation," even if it is correct.

Chomsky had said that "JFK more or less went along with the McNamara-Taylor recommendations, though he was hesitant about committing himself to the 1000-man withdrawal, since he thought the predictions might be too optimistic." NSAM 263 "was the McNamara-Taylor plan endorsed with reservations by JFK."

> 3. I cannot believe you fail to see a significant difference between:
>
> a) Mary is doing well in school. She should graduate on schedule.
>
> b) If Mary continues to do well in school, she will graduate on schedule.

*Chomsky never budged an inch in maintaining that the phrase "without impairment of the war effort" in McNamara-Taylor's Recommendation 3 was the "*explicit*" and "*crucial *condition [his emphasis] of NSAM 263 (contrary to your contention that it is merely an assumption, not a condition)."*

The irony of this should not be missed. Here I was explaining the difference between an assumption and a condition to the world's most famous linguist!

> a) is analogous with McNamara-Taylor, containing a prediction and an assumption, or, if you like, an implicit condition. In a), graduation is assumed to be probable. In b), which contains an explicit condition, graduation is neither probable nor improbable. You refer to McNamara-Taylor as if it were analogous to b), implying that withdrawal was assumed to be neither probable nor improbable. This is simply not true, and misleading. The implication of NSAM 263 and the McNamara-Taylor recommendations was that withdrawal by the end of 1965 was probable.
>
> The phrase "without impairment of the war effort," which you attach great significance to, means, from the point of view of the people who made the statement (McNamara and Taylor, and, confirming them, JFK), "without impairment of the effort by the South Vietnamese government, with US assistance, to suppress the Viet Cong insurgency." This was the official definition of "victory."

The quotation is from the McNamara-Taylor report (PP Gravel, Vol. 2, p. 757), the conclusion of the section entitled "Military Situation and Trends":

> Acknowledging the progress achieved to date, there still remains the question of when the final military victory can be attained. If, by victory, we mean the reduction of the insurgency to something little more than sporadic banditry in outlying districts, it is the view of the vast majority of military commanders consulted that success may be achieved in the I, II and II Corps area by the end of CY 1964. Victory in the IV Corps will take longer – at least well into 1965. These estimates necessarily assume that the political situation does not significantly impede the effort.

> When Kennedy issued NSAM 263, no such impairment was foreseen, and "victory" was in sight – probable – by the end of 1965.
>
> All speculation as to how Kennedy may have *really* seen the situation is irrelevant to establishing the facts. My opinion is that he must have seen the writing on the wall, and was creating a context for withdrawal that would allow a "victory" of sorts regardless of the true military situation. You will disagree, but again I remind you that Bush withdrew from the Gulf after declaring a "victory" that was unconvincing to many, and Reagan withdrew from Lebanon without declaring anything at all. You insist that Kennedy would not have accepted any "victory" short of what Johnson and Nixon vainly pursued, but this is just as speculative as my opinion (and that of O'Donnell, Powers, Mansfield, etc.) that he would have.

> 4. The facts of the withdrawal plan are of marginal interest to you because you misstate them, in my opinion.

Chomsky had repeated that Thesis I and IA were uncontroversially true and therefore of no interest. "I take it you reject Thesis II as well," he said, "in which case our entire correspondence is a total waste of time, since that is the only thesis with any interest at all."

A crucial part of the "uncontroversial" truth of Thesis I and IA, however, for Chomsky, was the "condition" of "victory," which I did not accept.

> The point is not that JFK *would* withdraw *if* victory was assured. The point is that he *was* withdrawing *because* victory was, if not assured, probable. This is the fact which has been ignored or misrepresented by most "serious historians," including the New York Times edition of the Pentagon Papers. The Gravel edition makes it clear, but it is incompatible with most secondary accounts, including yours.
>
> 5. The entire Oct. 2 White House statement was attributed to McNamara and Taylor, not just the 1000-man withdrawal.

Chomsky had said that JFK was "hesitant enough about the prospects [for withdrawal] that he dragged his feet in October-November 1963, not entirely convinced by the optimistic pronouncements of the military and McNamara." That was why "he insisted that the 1000-man withdrawal be left as their recommendation, not part of his proposal, so he wouldn't be stuck with it." The Oct. 2, 1963 statement read:

> *Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgement that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965, although there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 U.S. military personnel assigned to South Viet-Nam can be withdrawn (*Documents on American Foreign Relations 1963, Council on Foreign Relations*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, p. 296).*

> Again, you can speculate as to Kennedy's reasons for putting it this way, but it does not mean he "dragged his feet" or was "hesitant" or "not entirely convinced" of their recommendations, which he approved three days later and officially implemented, secretly, by NSAM 263 on Oct. 11. This is your interpretation.
>
> My interpretation is that Kennedy wanted the withdrawal to look as much like a sound military strategy as possible so as to contain the backlash of the hawks in his own administration, in congress, and in the public at large. He failed, as the events of November 22 showed.
>
> I would be interested to see your documentation of JFK's "distancing himself from the withdrawal plans publicly announced by the military, and refusing to commit himself to them" after Oct. 11.

"In public," Chomsky had said, "he indicated his hesitations right through November, always distancing himself from the withdrawal plans publicly announced by the military, and refusing to commit himself to them.

> He certainly committed himself to them with NSAM 263, and as I've said, I know of *no evidence whatsoever that Kennedy himself changed his assessment of the war, much less his withdrawal plans, after Oct. 11.* If such evidence exists, I will reconsider my position, but it would have to be directly attributable to JFK, on a par with NSAM 263.

And not attributable, for example, to a document drafted by McGeorge Bundy and that we are

supposed to assume JFK would have signed.

> I see no reason to reject Thesis II – that JFK intended to withdraw short of "victory." This, unlike what you call Thesis I and IA, is indeed a thesis, but none of the "evidence" you have reviewed undermines it. There can be no evidence of JFK's secret intentions or of what he would have done. The closest we can come to "evidence" in this case is what O'Donnell et al. said Kennedy told them he would do, and it supports Thesis II.
>
> You accuse me of continually switching from Thesis II to Thesis IA.

Chomsky had said I was evading the question he had asked about Schlesinger et al. Since they mentioned JFK's withdrawal plan only after Tet 1968, were they 1) "lying, pre-Tet," 2) had JFK kept it a secret from his closest advisers, or 3) were there in fact "no plans to withdraw without victory"? "A rational person," Chomsky said, "will, naturally, assume (3)." I, however, was "continually evading the question by shifting from Thesis II to Thesis I (or the specific implementation of I, IA), which is too uninteresting to discuss."

> The truth is that you are continually switching from the plain facts, which you insist on calling a "thesis" and dismiss as "uninteresting," to Thesis II. Then you say, in effect, "Either you defend Thesis II, or our correspondence is a waste of time"!
>
> This is quite unfair. I believe Thesis II is correct, but I am trying to get to first base first, which is to get you to accept the facts as they are. You do *not* accept the facts as they are if you continue to insist that "there was no policy reversal." You can't have it both ways. You want to say: Of course the withdrawal policy was reversed, but this is totally uninteresting; the only thing that is interesting and important is that it wasn't *really* a policy reversal. It is you who are playing a word game.
>
> If not, you would willing to state your position thus (as I have been urging you to do): LBJ did reverse JFK's withdrawal policy, but it was because conditions changed; their basic policy of victory remained the same. I suggest you ask yourself again why you find this formulation unacceptable.
>
> 6. Optimism may have declined after Diem's assassination on Nov. 1, but again, I know of no evidence that JFK changed his assessment of the war or his withdrawal policy after NSAM 263.

Chomsky had written that after the Diem coup, "it became clear that the optimistic projections were built on sand." Doubts mounted through November and "were aired among the top advisers" at the Nov. 20 Honolulu meeting, and in the draft 273, which "everyone expected" JFK to sign, "some modifications can be detected."

> On the contrary, whatever one thinks of the Bundy draft and NSAM 273 itself, both confirm the policy announced on Oct. 2. I agree with Scott and (now) Schlesinger, who say Paragraph 2 of NSAM 273 is a lie, and I think Bundy wrote the draft for Johnson, but I need not insist on either point, for the purpose of our discussion.

Para. 2 of NSAM 273, in both versions, reads:

The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel

remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.

The point I was making – simple enough, one would think, but obviously not in this conversation – was that one only has to take this sentence at face value to establish the fact that the withdrawal policy was reversed at a later time (and therefore also after the assassination, of course).

> 7. Agreed that it was clear from late December that the withdrawal plan was doomed.

As Chomsky had put it, "From late December it became clear that withdrawal could not be carried out 'without impairment of the war effort.'" Therefore, "the plan to implement withdrawal on condition of military victory had to be cancelled by early 1964." None of JFK's top advisers "had any criticism of LBJ for departing from JFK's position – the reason being, of course, that they sensed no departure."

> Note too, however, that Johnson began to have "doubts" about it in early December (according to PP Gravel), that is, within days of the assassination. The fact that JFK's advisers sensed no departure from JFK's policy – assuming we can know what they "sensed" at the time – is of no significance. NSAM 273 *stated* that there was no departure. In order to "sense" a departure, in contradiction to stated policy, one would have to have been psychologically willing and able to deal with the implications: that the new president was a liar and that the murder of the old one may have been a coup. People have trouble enough dealing with those implications now. How many do you think could have managed it then? Remember too that we are talking about military and government careerists, who are not generally noteworthy for their independence of mind, and this "sense of departure," given the implications, would require them to be revolutionaries.
>
> This is also the answer to your argument that no conspiracy of such grand proportions could have occurred.

Chomsky had repeated his belief that the conspiracy I envisioned "must be huge," simply because there is "not a hint, not a phrase" in the "declassified record, which involves a very large number of people and their private conversations," that any of these people "even gave a thought to the possibility of any high-level involvement in the assassination." There could be only two explanations for that, Chomsky said: "either they were astonishingly well-disciplined in internal discussion, or the entire record was completely sanitized and rewritten – in which case the conspiracy reaches to a good part of the historical profession." It is also "necessary to assume that the physics profession is in on the plot, and has therefore concealed the truth about the analysis of alleged evidence about the assassination conducted by the National Academy of Sciences and others," and that the medical profession too has been concealing the truth about how the doctors and analysts allegedly falsified the record." This would require astonishing" "discipline among the high level planners, the historians, physical scientists, the medical profession, etc.," since "not one word has leaked, even in private gossip, for 30 years. Truly a miraculous series of events, absolutely unprecedented in history or personal experience."

> How do you think the lie that US national security was at stake in Vietnam was propagated and maintained? That was not a deliberate lie, and thus not a conspiracy, for the great majority, even at the upper echelons. Lies work not because most people are liars but because most people believe them, if they

support, rather than challenge, the general political mythology ("All Americans are on the same side," "American policy is always well-intentioned," "If there was a scandal the free press would expose it," "A coup d'état is impossible in America," etc.).

Conspiracies, which are conglomerations of lies, work for the same reason. The number of actual conspirators does not have to be – cannot be – large. What is necessary for a conspiracy to obtain grand proportions, while initiated and maintained at the center by a relative small number of knowing participants (liars), is that the capacity of the human mind to shift "paradigms," as Thomas Kuhn calls them, or propaganda models, as Chomsky calls them, be quite limited ("Orwell's problem").

Schlesinger is a case in point. I believe I answered your question, but to repeat, the answer is: None Of The Above. I don't believe Schlesinger contends there was a "secret plan" to end the war. He is merely admitting the truth that he failed to recognize in 1965 – that LBJ reversed the withdrawal policy. He knew there was a public plan to end American participation in the war, and a secret implementation of that plan (NSAM 263), but he failed to "sense" LBJ's reversal of the policy because it clashed with the imperative propaganda of the time, which was that there was "no change in policy." When the war had been clearly lost and it became permissible to blame Johnson and Nixon for it, and simultaneously exonerate JFK and, by implication, himself, his sense of reality changed accordingly. If he goes beyond that, now, and speculates as to what JFK *would have done*, that is also permissible now, but it remains speculation, just as your contention to the contrary is speculation.

Schlesinger was not lying, in 1965 or now. He knew the "facts," then and now – just as I think you and I know them, despite our discussion. The only thing that has changed, in Schlesinger's case, is that he no longer feels compelled (unconsciously) to maintain the myth that there was no policy reversal. He now permits himself to recognize that there was a policy reversal, but at the same time he does not permit himself to recognize its possible connection with the assassination. Since the latter position is obviously naive, he must defend it with the kind of hysterical name-calling he resorts to in his review of the Stone film, without even attempting justification.

Schlesinger's current position, though naive, is more tenable than yours, in my opinion. If he is driven by JFK hagiography, perhaps you are driven by an exaggerated anti-hagiographical reaction to the Cameloters (and a particular antipathy towards JFK?), and a general aversion to conspiracy theories. You simply cannot change the fact that JFK's assessment of the war and consequent plan to withdraw remained in place and on the record as his policy until it was reversed by Johnson sometime between Nov. 22 and March 1964 (at the latest). You can call it "Thesis IA" and "uninteresting" – though admittedly true – on the one hand, then dispute it by insisting there was "no policy change," and then accuse *me* of being irrational, playing word games, evading the issue, "shifting theses," etc., but with all respect, aren't you putting the shoe on the wrong foot?

Sincerely,
Michael

In his letter of 6/1/93, Chomsky repeated his claim that JFK "reluctantly authorized withdrawal on the explicit condition that victory was guaranteed," that NSAM 263 "endorses the McNamara-Taylor recommendations for withdrawal, but only if this can be done 'without

impairment of the war effort' – that is, on condition of victory."

All of my efforts to challenge his interpretation of that phrase as an "explicit condition," as opposed to an "assumption" or at best "implicit condition," were in vain. This was merely my "tortured revision" as an "attempt to show that NSAM 263 doesn't mean what it says." My argument concerning conditions vs. assumptions "does not merit further discussion."

"We've left the arena of rational discussion far behind," Chomsky concluded, "and it seems pointless to persist."

Shortly thereafter I sent Chomsky a copy of Looking for the Enemy*, in which I had included his letter of 2/11/93. In a brief reply (6/21/93), he said he was "surprised, in fact, shocked" that I had done this without permission, "even more so than by the quality of the material."*

This is where things stayed for the next year or so, until after the first COPA (Coalition on Political Assassinations) meeting in October 1994, where I had been invited to give a talk on the Bay of Pigs (see Appendix). John Newman, about whom I had my misgivings, was on the governing board, and believing the best way to express my suspicions was openly and publicly, I sent "An Open Letter to John Newman" (Oct. 20, 1994) to all the members of the board. I also sent a copy to Chomsky. See Addenda 2-4.

Newman did not reply. Michael Parenti sent me an "Open Letter," to which I responded with an "Open Reply." I sent copies of these letters, too, to Chomsky. He replied briefly on February 9, 1995, fully exasperated, but "for the record" enclosing "a few excerpts from the book that you misquote with your usual consistency, which also extends to your treatment of the historical and documentary record." He then quoted, without further commentary, the following from Rethinking Camelot*:*

> *Meanwhile [early Nov., 1963], evidence that undermined the optimistic assessments was becoming harder to ignore. A week after the coup, State Department Intelligence, with the concurrence of the CIA, reported that by late October the military situation had sharply deteriorated, predicting "unfavorable end-1963 values" for its statistical factors. The new government confirmed that the GVN "had been losing the war against the VC in the Delta for some time because it had been losing the population." A top-level meeting was held in Honolulu on November 20 to consider the next steps. The US mission in Vietnam recommended that the withdrawal plans be maintained, the new government being "warmly disposed toward the U.S." and offering "opportunities to exploit that we never had before." Kennedy's plans to escalate the assault against the southern resistance could now be implemented, with a stable regime finally in place. McNamara, ever cautious, stressed that "South Vietnam is under tremendous pressure from the VC," noting a sharp increase in VC incidents after the coup, and urged that "We must be prepared to devote enough resources to this job of winning the war to be certain of accomplishing it..." At an 8AM White House meeting on November 22, Bundy was informed that "for the first time" military reporting was "realistic about the situation in the Delta" (pp. 81-82).*
>
> *… On Nov. 13, Jack Raymond reported that Defense officials say that the 1,000-man withdrawal plans remain unchanged. Two days later, he reported that at a news conference, while keeping the "official objectives announced on Oct. 2 to withdraw most of the troops by the end of 1965," Kennedy weakened the withdrawal plans, reducing the estimate for 1963 to "several hundred," pending the outcome of the Honolulu meeting. JFK again emphasized the need to "intensify the struggle" (p. 83).*

Feb. 21, 1995
Dear Noam,

Thanks for answering. It is more than Newman himself or Peter Scott have done – and we presumably *agree* on the political significance of the JFK assassination!

I did not "misquote" you in my letter to Newman. I referred to pp. 91-93, where you state clearly that the assessments of the military situation in Vietnam were radically revised *after* JFK's murder, beginning with McCone's report to Johnson on November 24.

You now quote to me from pp. 81-83, where you say there were negative reports in early November. I don't think anyone denies this. The question is when the *consensus* changed from optimistic to pessimistic. Your remarks on pp. 91-93 are the clearest statement I know of that the consensus changed *after* Nov. 22, and they are confirmed by Lodge's optimistic appraisal at the Honolulu conference on Nov. 20, which I quoted in the Newman letter.

Why are you hedging now? Do you want to say now that what you say on pp. 91-93 is misleading, or that only stupid readers like me would understand it the way I have? Do you want to say now that the consensus changed before Nov. 22, or that there never was a consensus either way?

The fact is that you say clearly in the book what I tried in vain to get you to say in our correspondence: that the assessment of the military situation changed radically – after Nov. 22, but only coincidentally – which caused the withdrawal policy to be reversed (or in your words, "which canceled the assumptions on which the withdrawal plans had been conditioned" [p. 91]). The facts are thus:

1. JFK was murdered (quite coincidentally, from your point of view) on Nov. 22.

2. "The first report prepared for LBJ (November 23) opened with this 'Summary Assessment': 'The outlook is hopeful. There is better assurance than under Diem that the war can be won. We are pulling out 1,000 American troops by the end of 1963'" (p. 91).

3. "The next day, however, CIA Director John McCone informed the President that the CIA *now* regarded the situation as 'somewhat more serious' than had been thought, with 'a continuing increase in Viet Cong activity since the first of November' (the coup). Subsequent reports only deepened the gloom" (p. 91, my emphasis).

4. McCone's reassessment was *retrospective*: "McCone agreed [in *December*] that 'indices on progress of the war turned unfavorable for the GVN' about July 1963, moving 'very sharply against the GVN' after the coup" (p. 92).

5. In the light of the "radically revised assessments of the military situation, which cancelled the assumptions on which the withdrawal plans had been conditioned" (p. 91) – all (coincidentally) after Nov. 22 – the US position moved, as you put it in the title of this chapter, "from terror [JFK's policy of counterinsurgency] to aggression" (LBJ's policy of direct involvement).

Note that I have avoided saying that LBJ "reversed the withdrawal policy," since you made it clear in our previous correspondence that you will not accept

this formulation. For you, LBJ was if anything less hawkish than JFK, and their policy of winning the war, and withdrawing only on condition of victory, was the same. As you know, I disagree with you on this, but this does not mean we have to disagree on points 1-5 above.

Can we agree, finally, on these five points? Or do you think I have "misquoted" you again?

I cannot understand why you think our discussion is a "waste of time," particularly since in one of your previous letters you said my questions had helped you clarify your own thinking on these matters (albeit with conclusions opposite to mine). I am hoping that you will be kind enough to return the favor, at least as far as my understanding of your position is concerned. Your book, especially pp. 91-93, made it clear to me that we agree on the one crucial (to me, anyway) point that I was trying to establish during our correspondence (or 5 points, as above). Now you say that I have misunderstood and misrepresented what you say in the book. Is it too much to ask you to say, as clearly as possible, whether you agree with points 1-5 above, which are stated almost entirely in your own words?

Sincerely,
Michael

Yes, it was. Chomsky had lost all patience with me. As for my letter to Newman, he said (3/13/95):

After having read your utterly convincing theory of Newman being an agent, programmed to write a book that could easily be dismissed in standard black propaganda style so as to conceal the real truth, maybe that's true of others too. There is someone who comes to mind. How about fessing up, finally, before someone else notices it too. Or maybe that would be too dangerous: the CIA has its ways of dealing with traitors, as we know.

March 23, 1995
Dear Noam,

Your resort to sarcasm demonstrates not only the poverty of your arguments but a very large measure of *mauvaise foi*. Perhaps I should thank you for liberating me from the obviously exaggerated esteem in which I once held you, but you do not deserve to be thanked and the transition from profound disappointment to "liberation" has been neither easy nor pleasant, so I'll skip it.

You show how willing, eager in fact, you are to slug it out with all the dirty tricks of a street thug (or our friends from Langley) when it is clear that your opponent is winning the argument. I noticed this before, when I saw how you insisted on simply repeating your own arguments rather than responding to mine, and how easily you resorted to name-calling in lieu of argumentation. I'm referring to your description of Prouty as a "raving fascist" and a "fraud." When I asked you to explain why you think so, besides the claim that he is "associated" with Liberty Lobby, you did not respond. And this from a guy who himself has been denounced as an "anti-Semite" because he defended Faurisson's right to speak!

I did not say or imply that the pessimistic reports you mention on pp. 81-83 of *Rethinking Camelot* came after Nov. 22, and you know it. I said that YOU SAY (on pp. 91-93) that the consensus changed radically immediately after Nov. 22. This is merely a ridiculous and totally transparent attempt on your part to avoid my question.

You protest far too much. If you were half as intelligent as I once thought you were, you would long ago have accepted the fact (especially since you make it clear yourself on pp. 91-93, and as the Gravel Pentagon Papers also make clear) that the military assessment was reversed immediately after JFK's murder. You would also have admitted that you consider this a coincidence unless it can be proved otherwise (which makes your position, as I have told you, essentially identical to Schlesinger's). I'm sure you could have trotted out a long list of similar coincidences, and any freshman composition student is aware of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy.

But no. Out of arrogance or just plain stupidity, you refuse to admit that the military assessment was reversed after Nov. 22 – plainly contradicting yourself as well as the documentary record. You also continue to ignore my point, which I have made abundantly clear, by treating it as if it were the same as John Newman's, which it quite obviously is not.

The only people who are arguing about JFK's "secret intentions to withdraw without victory" are you and Newman. I am talking about JFK's documented and public intention to withdraw on the assumption (not condition) of continued military success. This assumption was reversed, AFTER Nov. 22, and subsequently the withdrawal policy was also reversed. I cannot believe that you are too stupid to understand the difference between this and Newman's much more speculative thesis, so I can only ascribe your stubbornness here to arrogance: How can a mere Michael Morrissey be right, and Noam Chomsky be wrong?

I don't think you are an agent. It has crossed my mind, but I don't think you would have written to me if you were. You would have been more likely to ignore me, as John Newman has done. I think you are a man who has been told far too many times how brilliant he is, an American who cannot rid himself of the illusion that the United States is still "the freest country in the world" (as you said in the film *Manufacturing Consent* – and you should have heard the German audience groan at that), and the best example of a propagandized intellectual that I can think of. I'm sure that your IQ by the Bell Curve's standard is impressively high, but you are still an American, and the idea that a coup d'état could take place in America, especially without perspicacious commentators such as your friend Alexander Cockburn and geniuses such as yourself even being aware of it, is simply beyond your capacity. The idea is too big for you. You cannot take the shock, confusion, and fear that this idea brings with it when you let it into your brain, especially the shock of recognizing that you are as subject to mind control as anyone else, and that you are a slave just like the rest of us.

And yes, I believe I am beyond you in this respect, because I KNOW that I can be wrong, can be deluded to a point that I would never have dreamed possible, especially because I always thought of myself as fairly well-informed, skeptical, independent, etc. I don't think you have ever had such an experience. You think you can see through the self-delusion and propagandization of others, and perhaps you do, but you have not seen through yourself. The idea that you can be (and are) a victim has not penetrated, and IQ doesn't help at all here.

My best defense against your snide suggestion that I am an agent is my quarrel with you. I believe the CIA killed JFK and have said so publicly, and about half of the American population have similar suspicions, according to a *Time*/CNN poll taken *before* the Stone film came out (*Time*, Jan. 13, 1992, European ed., p. 40). Your foolish insistence that there is no evidence of high-level conspiracy, and your even more foolish and (now) blatantly self-contradictory "position" on the withdrawal question, support the established lies on both issues and thus help to exonerate the

CIA, the government as a whole, and the complicit media Establishment. Which of the two of us looks more like an agent? Your long association with MIT, despite the incongruity of the nation's most prominent "radical leftist dissident" being so tight with the nation's No. 1 educational institution with military and intelligence ties, is also suspicious.

But I do not stoop as easily as you do to mud-slinging, and I will not accuse you of being an agent, even though your actions aid the enemy much more than mine. Nor did I accuse Newman of being an agent. I referred to his well-known intelligence background and asked him a few perfectly legitimate and justifiable questions. If he were honest, he would have nothing to fear by answering them, and everything to gain – namely, credibility. But his silence is also an answer, and it speaks even worse for him than your sarcasm does for you.

Sincerely,
Michael

I did not have the last word. In his curt reply (and last letter to me) on 4/3/95, Chomsky referred me to Rethinking Camelot *concerning his "alleged refusal" to answer my question about Prouty (though in the book he says only that Prouty's evidence is "anecdotal"). "The remainder," he said, "is at the same level of respect for fact, making it clear that there is no point proceeding. That's it, for me."*

That was it for me, too.

Although I told Chomsky in 1995 that I did not think he was an agent, in retrospect, writing now in 2007 and having witnessed his continuing ostrich-like refusal to acknowledge any evidence for "conspiracy" regarding the events of 9/11 – except for the government's own implausible conspiracy theory, which the majority of the population now reject – I am much less inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt.

7. Review of *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*

The Men Who Killed Kennedy *is a British (ITV) documentary film directed by Nigel Turner. I wrote this shortly after I interviewed Turner in London in March 1989. Turner's film was finally broadcast in the US in September 1991 on A&E cable, just a couple of months before Stone's* JFK *opened.*

In view of the lukewarm reception given to several television documentaries last November on the assassination of President Kennedy, it is astonishing that the best film on the subject has not been shown in the United States. *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, produced by Nigel Turner for British Central Independent Television, was broadcast in England on October 25, 1988, and subsequently in thirty other countries by Christmas – but not in the United States.

What this film, nominated for best documentary by the British Association of Film and Television Arts, reveals about the Kennedy assassination and its aftermath is so spectacular that it is unconscionable to ignore it. It presents key evidence and testimony made public for the first time in 25 years, including an eyewitness who was standing on the grassy knoll, probably a few feet away from the gunman who fired the fatal head shot. The most spectacular revelation, based on the research of American writer Steve Rivele, is nothing less than the names of the probable gunmen (none of whom was Lee Harvey Oswald).

These findings are the result of years of painstaking research, presented soberly and without melodrama. If it smacks of sensationalism, it is only because anything hinting at the truth in this case *must* sound sensational. If the government has colluded with the press for over 25 years in propagating a fictitious account of what happened in Dallas, which unfortunately seems to be the case, how could the truth sound anything other than sensational?

If the press has *not* been participating in the cover-up, why do almost all reports on the subject continue to flout the evidence, referring disparagingly to those who do not accept the now thoroughly discredited Warren Commission Report as "conspiratorialists"? The evidence that the assassination was a conspiracy is overwhelming, and has been in for a long time. The majority of the American people believed it in 1966, according to a Louis Harris poll of that year, and even the House Assassinations Committee was finally forced to conclude in 1979 that there had to have been more than one gunman (i.e. a conspiracy).

How is it possible, then, in 1988, for otherwise respectable journalists to mouth such pablum as "the single-bullet theory, though implausible, remains intact" (Walter Goodman, paraphrasing Walter Cronkite, in *The New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1988)? How is it possible that the Abraham Zapruder film of the shooting, which clearly shows Kennedy's head jerked back by a bullet fired from the front, has been kept secret for 25 years, although *Time-Life* has been in possession of it all this time? How is it possible that Gordon Arnold, the eyewitness on the grassy knoll, who offered to testify years ago, has been totally ignored not only by investigating agencies but also by the press? Above all, why has this superb documentary, which presents this evidence and testimony, and more, for the first time, been denied an American audience?

I talked about this in London with Turner and his associate producer, Susan Winter. The major American networks have seen the film, of course, and it is being shown privately in the U.S. A well-placed friend of Turner's who had seen the film explained the American networks' curious disinterest this way: "Nigel," he said, "you're shaking the leaves on the trees." No one can see this film without being shaken, but Turner's friend was referring to foliage of monstrous proportions. Two witnesses in the film give us an idea of just how large and pernicious a growth we are dealing with:

Dr. Cyril Wecht, forensic pathologist:

> I think it's extremely important for the American people to know that there can be the overthrow of a government, and that there can be a coup d'état, in America, that that in fact did happen through the assassination of President Kennedy.

Col. Fletcher Prouty, Chief of Special Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Kennedy's presidency:

> I think without any question it's what we called the use of hired gunmen. And this isn't new. In fact, this little manual here, which is called "the assassination manual for Latin America" [*Clandestine Operations Manual for Central America*, a CIA publication] says that, talking about Latin America, 'if possible, professional criminals will be hired to carry out specific, selective "jobs"' – "jobs" in quotes, which means murders. Well, if this manual for Latin America, printed within the last few years, and a government manual, says that, there's no question but what the application of the same techniques was dated back in Kennedy's time – in fact I know that from my own experience, you know, I was in that business in those days. So, with that knowledge, you begin to realize hired criminals, the way this book says, can be hired by anybody in power with sufficient money to pay them, but, more importantly, with sufficient power to operate the cover-up ever after.
>
> Because you see it's one thing to kill somebody; it's another thing to cover up the fact that you did it or that you hired someone to do it. That's more difficult. So they used the device of the Warren Commission to cover up their hired killers. Now, who would hire the killers? And who has the power to put that Warren Commission report out over the top of the whole story? You see, you're dealing with a very high echelon of power. It doesn't necessarily reside in any government. It doesn't necessarily reside in any single corporate institution. But it seems to reside in a blend of the two. Otherwise, how could you have gotten people like the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to participate in the cover-up, the police in Dallas to participate in the cover-up, etc. – and the media, all the media, not just one or two newspapers, but none of them will print the story that other than Oswald killed the President with three bullets – something that's absolutely untrue.

It must be remembered that the first hints at Mafia involvement in the assassination came from Europe. French journalists had suggested a Mob conspiracy as early as December, 1963, a suggestion which was reiterated by Thomas Buchanan in the 1964 British edition of his *Who Killed Kennedy?* But as David Scheim points out in *Contract on America: The Mafia Murder of President John F. Kennedy* (sold in England under the title *The Mafia Killed President Kennedy*), the American edition of Buchanan's book was censored to remove all references to organized crime. The fact that Turner's

team was able to get witnesses to speak out who had kept silent for 25 years has a lot to do with their being British. Money, at least, was not a factor; no fees were paid for the interviews, and some witnesses had refused lucrative offers from American journalists.

To understand this, we must remember that these eyewitnesses know the truth. More to the point, they know that the truth has been systematically suppressed by their own governmental agencies and the press. It is not only the fear, as one comments in the film, of becoming one of those witnesses who committed "suicide" by shooting themselves in the back. They have been profoundly and tragically isolated, knowing from first-hand experience that the government and the press cannot be trusted. The fact that Turner was offering them a chance to be heard *outside* the United States is what gave them the courage to finally speak out. These are not kooks or publicity hounds, but ordinary Americans who have been caught and almost lost in a web of violence and duplicity so finely meshed that they have had nowhere to turn. Their testimony under these circumstances is an act of both physical and moral courage.

Turner, a free-lancer, was still at Oxford when Kennedy was killed. He came to the assignment to do a documentary for the 25th anniversary of the assassination four years ago, with no reason to doubt the Warren Report. Three years of research, including a year in Dallas, and over 300 interviews changed that.

I had the impression that this scholarly-looking Englishman, with sensitive features and an unassuming manner, who admires much about the United States (there are still some Europeans who do), had stumbled onto an America which he had not set out to find, and which saddened him profoundly. As an American, I am also sad, but more than that, I am angry.

Who cannot be incensed, for example, when we learn from eyewitness accounts, after 25 years, that the casket Kennedy's body left Dallas in was not the same one that was opened for the autopsy in Washington, and that although the physicians in Dallas found only 25% of the brain tissue missing due to the wound, there was no brain matter at all in the skull when it was examined again in Washington? This means that essential information about the bullet and its trajectory disappeared forever. How can we swallow the fact that key evidence confiscated by the FBI simply disappeared? There was physical evidence of a missed shot that hit a curbstone and slightly injured a bystander, but the supposedly inconclusive spectrographic analysis of the stone was destroyed for lack of space – 1/32 inch in one of the largest archives in the world! There was an amateur film taken by a bystander as the motorcade passed between her and the grassy knoll: if anyone had fired from the knoll, as this woman and more than fifty other eyewitnesses testified, the gunmen would be visible in the film. This film was dutifully handed over to the FBI immediately after the assassination – and never heard of again.

We also see in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, astonishingly enough, also for the first time, not only the Zapruder footage, showing the impact of a bullet fired from the front, but also the official autopsy photos. These photos show a tiny entrance wound in the back of the skull, in exactly the position where the examining physicians in Dallas describe a massive exit wound. It is obvious, as Robert Groden points out, why the Warren Commission refused even to look at the photos, and why the House

Assassinations Committee, though it looked at them, refused to show them to the Dallas doctors: they had been faked. What's more, it would have become obvious that they were faked by someone in the United States Government, because no one else had access to them.

At the end of the film, we are told the names of the probable hit men, the men behind the contract, and the underworld sources of this information. All of the principals, according to Steve Rivele, who spent five years investigating the case, had CIA connections at some point in their careers. Rivele believes that the CIA felt so "compromised" by these circumstances that the cover-up became necessary. This is a relatively innocuous explanation of the CIA's role in the affair.

Of the three men Rivele claims were the assassins, two are still alive. One of these is at large on outstanding drug charges; the other lives in Marseille. Not surprisingly, all three have alibis for the time of the assassination. It would be much more surprising if anyone involved in a conspiracy on this scale did *not* have a good alibi. What is surprising is the willingness of the authorities and the press to dismiss Rivele's allegations so easily. The FBI has long since been informed, but no one has been apprehended, even for questioning. The reaction of the press, in this case the European press, since the film has not even been shown in the U.S., is typified by Pierre Salinger, writing in the *International Herald Tribune* (Nov. 2, 1988):

> We now know that two of them were nowhere near the scene of the crime. One was aboard a French minesweeper in the harbor of Toulon (as verified by the Defense Ministry in Paris). The second was in prison in Marseille (as the Justice Ministry confirmed). The third man, a French newspaper has established, was on sick leave from his job in Marseille as a docker, having lost an eye. Is it possible to believe that such a man was recruited to kill the American president?

A more interesting question is: Is it possible to believe the former press secretary to President Kennedy is so naive? Can such a man sincerely believe that a newspaper report "establishes" anything, that the statement of the one of the accused or medical certificates produced by the daughter of another of the accused are credible, that 25-year-old government records cannot be manipulated, in a case where the official autopsy photos of the President of the United States were probably faked?

The strangest thing about Salinger's article is what it doesn't say. He mentions nothing about the evidence in the film of a cover-up, which is much more important than the question of who fired the shots. Is it possible that a man as close to Kennedy as Salinger was is not affected by the news (if it is news) that the president's corpse was manipulated and the autopsy photos faked? Is it possible that a journalist has no curiosity as to why *Time-Life* kept the Zapruder film under lock and key for 25 years? Is it possible that the former Kennedy press secretary is unaffected by the suggestion of the former Kennedy Chief of Special Operations (Col. Prouty) that the assassination and cover-up were both part of an egregious conspiracy that continues today?

Because of Salinger's special position in this history, as one close both to Kennedy and to the establishment press, it is particularly interesting to note that he, too, continues to make light of "conspiracy theories," in spite of the evidence. The title of his article is "The Conspiracy Theories Come – and Go." His resumé:

> But over the years, and with the plot mentality that grew out of the Watergate affair and the congressional investigations of the CIA in the 1970s, some Americans moved to the European view – yes, there was a conspiracy.

This is a distortion of even the officially acknowledged view, as stated ten years ago in the House Assassinations Committee Report (p. 95):

> The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.

Yes, there was a conspiracy. Why does the press seem determined to make us believe otherwise?

Another interesting press reaction to *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* was a widely quoted statement by another American, G. Robert Blakey, who was chief counsel to the House Assassinations Committee:

> The central part of this thesis, that is to say that the president was hit from the front right, is just simply medically not true.

This is a very curious statement. One wonders what medical evidence Blakey can be relying on, since we are told in the film that Kennedy's brain was removed before the autopsy and the autopsy photos faked. Dr. Wecht also tells us that no forensic examination of the few bullet fragments that remained were ever made, which might have proved (or not) that they were fired from the same gun. The point is that the "medical evidence" was either missing or had been falsified, a point which Blakey's remark misses entirely. One cannot help wondering if he saw the film at all, or if was quoted correctly. Things become even more confused when, for example, the *Birmingham Post* (Oct. 27) continues as follows:

> He [Blakey] said medical evidence presented by the Select House of Representatives Committee on Assassination in 1979 showed President Kennedy was hit only by bullets fired from behind by Lee Harvey Oswald.

We now have the clear impression that both Blakey and the Committee do not believe there was a conspiracy – an impression which is absolutely false. Can this be the Blakey who said, in a *Newsweek* interview in 1979 (July 30, p. 38):

> I am now firmly of the opinion that the Mob did it. It is a historical truth.

Can this be the same Committee which said on page 1 of their report:

> Scientific acoustical evidence establishes a high degree of probability that two gunmen fired at President John F. Kennedy.

Whether this kind of distortion is intended or not, it is very convenient for those who would still have us believe the fairy tale of the Warren Commission Report, which, in the words of Dr. Wecht, "should be taken from the non-fiction shelves of all the

libraries and placed with Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, and Gulliver's Travels." Whether in that case even poetic justice would be done is questionable.

Against this background, the authentic news footage we see again in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* of Oswald and Ruby themselves takes on a different hue. Oswald shows genuine surprise when he is told by a reporter that he has been charged with shooting the president, which is quite understandable, if he was a patsy. Ruby, in a BBC television interview, says:

> Everything pertaining to what's happening has never come to the surface. The world will never know the true facts of what occurred, my motives.

In response to the question, "Do you think it'll ever come out," he answers:

> No, because unfortunately the people [who] had so much to gain, and had such an ulterior motive to put me in the position I'm in, will never let the true facts come aboveboard to the world.

And in response to the question, "Are these people in very high positions," the answer is:

> Yes.

It is easy to question Ruby's credibility, but everything points to the truth of these statements. He is saying essentially the same thing that Wecht and Prouty say in the film, and these are very credible men who know from experience what they are talking about. The blend of power that Prouty refers to in the earlier quote would not be simply a matter of a few Mafia chieftains and a corrupt official or two. It would be a blend of criminal, political, and corporate interests amounting to a conspiracy of mammoth proportions, which did not end with the murder of John Kennedy. If these forces are diabolical and powerful enough to assassinate a president and get away with it, many more questions about the course of political events since 1963 must be answered. John Kennedy's assassination is not the only one which has been inadequately investigated (to say the least), and as David Scheim argues in *Contract on America*, the web of interests linking organized crime – which by now is often indistinguishable from "legitimate" capitalist greed – with anti-communism, with the CIA, with ghetto politics, with drugs and the munitions industry, with Cuba and Latin America, with Vietnam and God knows what else, is one that reaches right up to the White House of today.

We tend to forget, and we are not often reminded, that Kennedy's foreign and domestic policy initiatives were inimical not only to organized crime but to big money in general and a number of other interests. He alienated the CIA and the Mafia (for whom pre-Castro Cuba was a major source of income from gambling and prostitution) by refusing air support for the Bay of Pigs invasion and subsequently discouraging further anti-Castro activities. General recollection has it that Kennedy "stood tall" before the Russians in the Cuban missile crisis, but the fact is that he averted war by agreeing not to invade Cuba if Russia removed the missiles. He alienated a broad spectrum of right-wing extremists by pioneering civil rights and

acknowledging the leadership of Martin Luther King. He alienated the arms industry by proposing, in agreement with Krushchev, major long-range cuts in defense spending, and the oil industry by demanding cuts in the oil depletion allowance. General recollection also has it that Kennedy got us involved in Vietnam, but in fact he had already ordered the first withdrawal of troops when he was killed, and had planned major withdrawals by 1965.

If we look at the course of events since 1963 with what Salinger might call a "plot mentality," a number of things begin to make horrible sense. First of all, there were the assassinations of Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X, none of which have been properly investigated. For example, thousands of documents pertaining to the RFK case were kept secret by the state of California for twenty years, despite numerous appeals for their release. When the files were finally released, in April, 1988, it was learned that 2,410 police photographs had been burned in 1968, and that the Los Angeles police had also destroyed important physical evidence (*The New York Times*, April 21, 1988). If we look beyond the quagmire that surrounds all four assassinations (not to mention the murders of numerous witnesses and investigators), what binds them together is that they effectively decapitated the civil rights movement. In the 1960s, civil rights activism, coupled with the powerful religious leadership of King and Malcolm X, represented a virulent threat to the life blood of those who profit from the crime that is bred by poverty and social injustice. The Mafia needs the ghetto and the slum, where their "businesses" (drugs, prostitution, gambling) flourish and where they recruit their soldiers. Making good Christians (or Black Muslims) out of poor people means draining the bank accounts of the crooks.

Secondly, Kennedy's developing foreign policy of accommodation with communism was reversed. Cuba was already a lost cause, but at the same time a perfect excuse for continuing the holy wars against the red peril in virtually every country in Latin America and in southeast Asia. Anti-communism is the ideological banner under which these wars are fought – whether directly or by proxy or covert action – but the non-ideological and unscrupulous force of greed plays a greater role than most of us know. It is a fact that wars make certain people richer in a hurry. In addition to the "legitimate" spur to certain sectors of the economy that any war provides, fighting communism – however sincerely people may believe in this – also protects the interests of organized crime. It is a fact that southeast Asia and Latin America are the world's major sources of opium. And it is a fact that communist countries do not cooperate in international drug-trafficking.

The third way that things have changed since 1963 is in the character and spirit of presidential leadership itself. The question is whether this dearth of inspiration, not to mention charisma, in the White House is accidental. America is full of people with brilliant leadership potential: why don't they get near the White House? The Kennedys were hardly perfect, but they did move people in a way that none of our politicians have since. If there has been a conspiracy to *suppress* exactly this kind of leadership, it has been eminently served, wittingly or not, by Kennedy's successors. Johnson and Nixon pursued the Vietnam War until it brought the country to the verge of revolution, as the anti-war movement began to include large numbers of veterans and others who could no longer be dismissed as radicals, "effete intellectual snobs" (as

Spiro Agnew infamously put it), or tools of the international communist conspiracy. Drug-trafficking and the arms industry have flourished, channeling billions of dollars into areas of the economy of dubious value to the welfare of the nation. There has been no continuation of John and Robert Kennedy's campaign against organized crime. We had a Warren Commission of questionable integrity, and a former member of that commission (Ford) who, on becoming president, pardoned his former boss (Nixon), whose integrity was so questionable that he was run out of office. We have had eight years of a president (Reagan) who seemed a mere caricature of leadership – the very image of a puppet.

And now, another aspect of Kennedy's presidency has been reversed. We have gone from a president antagonistic to the CIA to one who directed it (1976-1977). We know that the CIA has covertly and violently manipulated political events around the world, and there is reason to suspect that it was involved in the events of the 1960s which radically changed the political course of our own country. Given what we know, and what we further suspect, about the CIA, is it not curious that the former head of this agency turns up in the White House? We do not wonder when the head of the KGB (Andropov) accedes to the highest office in the Soviet Union; after all, that is not a free country. But how can we not wonder when the analogous situation occurs here as the result of a supposedly democratic electoral process? If we assume the worst, that the assassination of Kennedy was a coup d'état engineered by the CIA (in conjunction with even more anonymous forces), as Dr. Wecht and Col. Prouty suggest, everything that has happened since then also makes sense, up to and including the fact that the former boss of the CIA, Kennedy's anathema, is now sitting in the oval office. If this is nonsense, and I hope it is, no one is in a better position to clarify matters than George Bush. And why should we not expect him to do so? National security? Just how much secrecy can a country tolerate, in the name of national security or anything else, and still call itself free?

On Nov. 25, three days after the assassination and the day after Ruby silenced Oswald, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach wrote the following memo to Bill Moyers:

> The world must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial.

One must conclude that the government and the media have done their best to adhere to this line for the past 25 years, and that the non-appearance of *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* on any American television station, after enthralling audiences in 30 other countries, is just another example of the cover-up. It may be true, as Walter Goodman writes about the documentaries that *were* shown on American television, that the Kennedy case "will continue to produce inconclusive exposés for at least another quarter-century" (*The New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1988). Not a bad estimate, since by 2013 most of the principals will be dead. (Salinger predicts another 100 years.) But the Turner film is anything but "inconclusive"; it is a strong yank at what looks like a hideous web of lies and murder at the highest levels of power, and if the American people get hold of it, it might just come unraveled. If they don't, the idea that the United States is a free country with a free press and a public with a right to know will

someday be revealed as the biggest lie of all.

Postscript

The Assassination of President Gore

I wrote the following on Sunday, Dec. 10, 2000, the day after the U.S. Supreme Court effectively halted the hand recount ordered by the Florida Supreme Court on Dec. 8, thus deciding the election in favor of Bush. The formalities were not over, but the writing was on the wall. Although this was not the first time a president was elected who lost the popular vote (Gore won by 543,895 votes; cf. Hayes vs. Tilden 1876 and Harrison vs. Cleveland 1888), it was the first time the outcome had been decided by the intervention of the Supreme Court. Here is a summary of what many now refer to as "Selection 2000":

> *The 2000 election will go down in history, not only for the gridlock in Florida, but also for the way in which it split the Supreme Court, which had never before stepped in to rule on a federal election. The court divided 5 – 4 on partisan lines in its decision to reverse the Florida Supreme Court, which had ordered manual recounts in certain counties, saying the recount was not treating all ballots equally, and was thus a violation of the Constitution's equal protection and due process guarantees. The Supreme Court essentially ruled that the Supreme Court of Florida would need to set up new voting standards and carry them out in a recount, but also mandated that this process and the recount take place by midnight, Dec. 12, 2000, the official deadline for certifying electoral college votes. Since the Court made its ruling just hours before the deadline, it in effect ensured that it was too late for a recount. In the end, tens of thousands of undervotes—votes that were never tallied by voting machines for a number of reasons—remained uncounted, casting doubt on who actually won the election. As the Dec. 16th edition of The Economist put it, "by remanding the decision to the Florida court with instructions to do something it knew to be impossible, the court ended the election but laid itself open to charges of intellectual dishonesty." In a scathing dissent, Justice John Paul Stevens said, "Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's presidential election, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law" (http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0877961.html).*

What we are witnessing now is an assassination without the blood. As in 1963, we are seeing the blatant usurpation of the presidency by the fascist powers that have controlled the country – behind an ever growing, omnipresent media smokescreen – ever since the execution of President Kennedy in Dealey Plaza.

This time the murder weapons are not rifles but voter fraud and judicial corruption at the highest level, as demonstrated by the US Supreme Court's announcement yesterday that it, in the person of five judges, will decide (tomorrow) who becomes president, and not the people who voted in Florida on Nov. 7. There is no longer any doubt what the outcome will be.

Gore has long since won the popular vote nationwide by more than 300,000 votes, and it has become clear that he would also win in Florida if the manual recount ordered by the Florida Supreme Court were allowed to continue. What the Republicans have failed to do by massive voter fraud in the state controlled by George W. Bush's little brother Jeb, and have threatened to do by legislative decree at the state level, they have now accomplished by judicial decree at the highest level.

The US Supreme Court is playing essentially the same role now as it did in 1964,

when Chief Justice Earl Warren produced a fairy tale known as the Warren Report that the majority of the American people have always known is a pack of lies. It is now sanctioning, as the highest authority, the virtual appointment of the president, against the express will of the people.

This may be a bloodless coup (so far, anyway), but it is no less significant, and even more transparent (if that is possible), than the events in Dealey Plaza that put the war president, LBJ, in office in 1963. Whatever the wording of the Court's opinion, it will decide for Bush and he will become president. The message to the people is clear, perhaps even clearer than it was in 1963: "We've got you by the balls. The fundamental principle of the state is not democracy; if it were, the votes in Florida would be counted. L'état, c'est moi." This is not a fairy tale à la Lee Harvey Oswald, but a clear statement of principle. We know where they stand, and thus we know where we stand.

The power axis is clearer, too. We need not speculate about the "conservative" forces in 1963 who feared a "Kennedy dynasty," and made doubly sure of preventing it by murdering brother Robert in 1968, and who now have achieved precisely that imperial wish with their own anointed family, the Bushes. (The first – erroneous – announcement of Bush as the winner on election night came from the Fox News Channel desk of John Ellis, a first cousin of George and Jeb.) The Bushes' alliance with the CIA, George Sr. having been the first former CIA director (if anybody can be "former" CIA) to occupy the White House, is in perfect contrast to the Kennedys' distrust and hatred of them (John having vowed at one time to "smash them into a thousand pieces and scatter them to the wind").

We've come a long way, baby. And where are we? The blood will come, as it did in Vietnam. I don't think George W. is being foisted upon us in this overtly fascistic manner for nothing. We will pay the price for our complacency if we let it stand, which I am afraid we will. Led by the fully complacent – and thus complicit – television (and other) media, we will listen to the interminable bla-bla from the talking heads until we can't stand it anymore and shut the damn thing off. The fundamental principle of democracy, the right to vote and have our votes counted, will have been blatantly violated by the highest authority in the land, which means the last vestiges of democracy are gone, and we will have accepted it. We should not be surprised when the Brown Shirts and the Gestapo re-appear.

Now, seven years later, the polls show that the majority of the population would now agree that this election theft was an adumbration of worse things to come. My prediction, of both the blood and the advancing police state, has unfortunately come true. Since this book, and my search for the enemy, began with the assassination of President Kennedy, it is appropriate to end it here, with the assassination by the Bush regime of our constitutional right to live in peace and freedom.

It is much clearer now than it was in 1993, or even in 2000, who the enemy is. It is still ourselves, in the end, since it is up to us to fight back, but the noose has tightened, and the faces of the hangmen and hangwomen are plain to see. One need only look at the records of our so-called representatives in Congress to see who voted for the Patriot Acts, the war appropriations, the Military Commissions Act of 2006, etc. They are by no means all Republicans. The great majority of Democrats, too, have failed, utterly and consistently, even after winning the 2006 election, to oppose the Bush-Cheney doctrines of militarism abroad and elitism and neo-fascism at home. The forces of evil are non-

partisan.